

'Peres, Arafat to meet in Bucharest'

CAIRO (R) — Israeli Foreign Minister has been quoted as saying he would meet Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat in Bucharest on April 22 to discuss Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. "He (Peres) indicated that if this meeting brought about tangible progress then he would come to Cairo with Arafat straight after the meeting," the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram said in a report from Tel Aviv. The newspaper said Mr. Peres was speaking to its correspondent but it did not give any of Mr. Peres's words or say when he spoke. It quoted the minister as saying he expected Israel and the PLO to complete an agreement on Gaza and Jericho by the end of this month. Once it was signed, Israeli troops could withdraw from the two areas within three or four days to make way for an autonomous Palestinian local government, he said. The Palestinian police force could move in at any time after the signing, as chosen by the PLO, he added.

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Renovations of Dome of the Rock completed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Work was completed Saturday on the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock mosque, a symbol of Jerusalem and a shrine sacred to Muslims around the world. In 21 months of renovations, the dome's leaky metal covering was replaced with 80 kilos of gold-plating. The work was carried out by an Irish company and funded by King Hussein. Celebrations marking the completion of the work were planned for Monday in Amman. A 20-member delegation from Arab towns in Israel was invited to attend the festivities. "This is a dream come true. It is an eternal symbol of the Arab presence in this holy town," said Issam Awad, an Islamic trust engineer who supervised the project. The mosque's graceful dome rises above Jerusalem's walled Old City in Arab East Jerusalem.

Iraq says it has long dropped claim to Kuwait

SANAA (R) — Iraq has long dropped its claim to Kuwait as its 19th province, Iraq's Information Minister Hamed Yousef Humadi said Saturday. Mr. Humadi told a news conference in the Yemeni capital Sanaa that Iraq, which invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and said it had become its 19th province, had long revoked this decision and the U.N. was told of the Iraqi position. "The Iraqi National Council (parliament) has revoked the annexation decision, and this was approved by the (ruling) Revolutionary Command Council and the United Nations was notified of this," he said. "This issue is separate, however, from Resolution 687 of the Security Council, providing for the lifting of sanctions once Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were destroyed." Mr. Humadi said. Officials in the region have said that the Gulf conflict cannot be finally settled as long as Iraq continued to claim Kuwait as its 19th province.

Afghan warlord ready to discuss any peace plan

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan (R) — Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum told a U.N. peace mission on Saturday he was willing to discuss any proposal to end factional conflict, a day after 200 people died in the fighting. "We are here for peace," ex-communist General Dostum, the leading force in northern Afghanistan, told Mahmoud Mestiri, special U.N. envoy trying to end the faction fighting that has killed more than 11,000 people in the past two years. "We welcome any suggestion you may have. We are happy to sit and discuss," Gen. Dostum told the former Tunisian foreign minister. Mr. Mestiri arrived in the ancient city of Mazar-e-Sharif on his third trip into Afghanistan since his mission began last month. Early this month he visited Kabul where Gen. Dostum and his chief ally, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have been battling since the new year to topple President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Retired Israeli generals demonstrate for peace process

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Some of Israel's top reserve generals demonstrated on a Tel Aviv street corner late Friday in favour of the government's peace talks, drawing both honks of support and curses of disdain from passersby. Thirty-two retired generals, including a former chief of staff and six former commanders of the navy and air force, waved Israeli flags and called on the public to support the peace process. The unusual gathering of generals came following a number of major street demonstrations against the peace accord reached with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

King: Jordan recognises no Palestinian group but PLO

All others have no legal status in Jordan

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein said Saturday that Jordan only recognises the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as such will not allow any other Palestinian group to operate from Jordanian territory.

The King said the government had decided that the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, had been operating illegally in Jordan before Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin discussed the issue in remarks he made Thursday.

King Hussein told a press conference at the Prime Ministry after chairing a Cabinet session that Jordan, ever since the Rabat Arab Summit, recognises only the PLO and that "in the Hashemite Kingdom of

Jordan we do not recognise or accept to cooperate with anybody except the PLO through its recognised organs and offices."

"We, the highest level of authority in this country, have been looking at developments in the region and decided to reemphasise our unwavering position adopted after deep discussion at Al Rabat summit in 1974 recognising the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Palestine," the King said.

"Any other group, Palestinian or non-Palestinian, is illegal... we do not deal with it and we will not accept any behaviour in its name from this territory... in terms of any action it takes or position it claims to represent," the King said.

"I call on Jordanians to realise this fact and to adhere to our consistent policy that has

been the policy of the government and Kingdom of Jordan," he said.

The decision to ban the activities of the Islamic group came after complaints from Mr. Rabin that Jordan was becoming "a paradise for the activities of Hamas." The complaint by the Israeli prime minister came after the movement's representatives in Amman issued a claim of responsibility for two suicide bomb attacks that killed 12 Israelis during the last 10 days and threatened to launch similar attacks in the future.

But the King was careful to point out that this issue was an "internal" Jordanian issue that had been discussed before Mr. Rabin issued his warning and that it was born of the continued Jordanian policy of extending support only to the PLO and not in response to pressure from outside.

State Department spokesman Michael McCurry said Friday the United States has been in touch with the government of Jordan about reports that Hamas has been operating in Jordan. He offered no details.

"The government of Jordan shares our abhorrence for terrorism," Mr. McCurry said. "The government of Jordan has a good record of acting to prevent terrorism."

The spokesman was unable to confirm reports that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had called Secretary of State Warren Christopher to complain that Jordan was allowing Hamas to operate on its territory.

Mr. McCurry said Mr. Christopher and Mr. Rabin "have been in contact on a range of matters in recent days," but he could not provide a readout on their con-



versions, nor was he able to confirm they had spoken by telephone on Friday.

A senior Jordanian official who asked to remain anonymous said the issue had been under discussion in the Cabinet since Hamas representative in Amman Mohammad Nazzal claimed his group's responsibility for the bus bomb attack in Hadera and had already issued instructions to the Interior Ministry to limit Hamas operations in the Kingdom.

"The minister of interior had instructions to call the two Hamas representatives and inform them that they were oper-

(Continued on page 5)

Cabinet scoffs at Israeli threats and restates Jordan's stand

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Saturday issued the following statement in response to Israeli threats levelled against Jordan. Minister of Information Jawad Anani read out the statement following a Cabinet session. Following is the text.

"The Jordanian government followed the serious and abrupt escalation in statements by Israeli officials, particularly the prime minister and foreign minister, directed against Jordan and its government in the light of the rising number of acts of violence in the occupied Arab territories and in Israel. The government also followed up on the escalation in the Israeli media which implied warnings and threats against Jordan of the possibility of taking military action against its security and sovereignty."

"The Jordanian government expresses its astonishment and outrage at the sudden statements which point an accusing finger at Jordan, alleging that it allowed Hamas spokesmen to give statements from Jordan on the Afula and Hadera bomb

blasts. "This approach, which has now been employed more than any time in the past, reflects the impotence of the Israeli government in handling the critical situation. Such impotence has prompted the Israeli government to accuse Jordan of acts of terrorism with the aim of distorting the country's reputation and to undermine its sincere desire and active efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region."

"Jordan has repeatedly warned against the dangers inherent in acts of violence resulting from the continued occupation of Arab lands and the consequence of Israel's arbitrary measures and collective punishments against the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories, the curfews and daily killings. Jordan has also been warning that these actions would only widen the cycle of violence and counter-violence."

"The Kingdom has also

(Continued on page 5)

Jordan to leave Yemen committee

By Rana Sabbagh
Reuters

AMMAN — King Hussein said Saturday Jordan was pulling out of a multinational commission that had succeeded in halting clashes between rival army units in Yemen.

This was the gist of a message the King said he sent to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beidh with Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who began a visit to Sanaa and Aden earlier in the day.

"Our brethren in Oman ended their mission and we are now in the process of finishing our mission," the King told a news conference. "This is the message that is being carried by our Jordanian delegation to Yemen."

Oman, Jordan's other Arab partner on the committee, formed to disengage army units that clashed hours after Yemen's bickering leaders signed a reconciliation pact in Amman on Feb. 20, said earlier this month it was ending its efforts.

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Yemen leaders meet envoy

YEMENI PRESIDENT Ali Abdullah Saleh Saturday received in Sanaa Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, who conveyed to him a message from His Majesty King Hussein on the situation in Yemen since the signing in Amman in February of a reform and reconciliation agreement.

Sharif Zeid underlined King Hussein's keenness to preserve Yemen's unity and stability and stressed the need for beginning the implementation of the reform and reconciliation agreement, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Sharif Zeid and Mr. Saleh reviewed at the meeting the work of the joint Jordanian-Omani-Yemeni military committee which was set up to supervise the implementation of military aspects of the agreement.

Sharif Zeid also met with Yemeni Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beidh and conveyed to him a message from King Hussein.



AIRBUS A-340: His Majesty King Hussein is briefed Saturday on the new A-340 generation of Airbus aircraft aboard a plane of the same type that arrived here to orient the concerned authorities in Jordan on the four-engine plane. The King test-piloted the plane for over one hour over Amman and southern Jordan to familiarise himself with the aircraft (Petra photo)

U.S. flights in north Iraq frozen as probe continues

ZAKHO, Iraq (Agencies) — The allied air force patrolling northern Iraq said Saturday it had suspended flights for a second day following Thursday's shootdown of two U.S. helicopters.

U.S. Navy Commander Ron Morse, a spokesman for the European command in Stuttgart, Germany, said no flights would take place despite his earlier statement that there was a flight schedule for Saturday.

He did not provide an explanation for the suspension.

No planes will patrol on Sunday either under a decision already made before the accident, said U.S. Air Force Captain Michael Shavers, a spokesman for Incirlik air base in Turkey.

"There are periodic down days once in a while," he said. Air patrols to protect Kurds in northern Iraq were sus-

pended Friday to reinforce safety procedures.

Meanwhile, a Kurdish official identified one of the 26 victims as U.S. Army Colonel Jerry Thompson, the outgoing commander of the Military Coordination Centre (MCC) here.

The MCC coordinates the humanitarian mission on behalf of Kurds under allied protection in northern Iraq and maintains contact with Iraqi Kurdish leaders.

Shazad Saib, a spokesman for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan speaking from Ankara, Turkey, said Thompson was killed along with his recently appointed replacement, U.S. Army Colonel Richard A. Muller.

Mr. Saib said the colonels were flying to Salahaddin, near the city of Erbil, to meet with the representatives of the U.N. office which coordinates human-

itarian efforts with the MCC and with Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The bodies of the victims were flown to Germany on Friday.

Two U.S. F-15C jets on Thursday shot down the helicopters apparently after mistaking them for Iraqi aircraft (see page 2).

American, French, British and Turkish warplanes have been patrolling a no-fly zone over northern Iraq since shortly after the end of the Gulf war to watch Baghdad's treatment of its Kurdish minority.

The coalition force sealed off the accident site, barring reporters from reaching the scene.

A team of U.S., British, French and Turkish experts were scheduled to begin an

(Continued on page 5)

NATO jet shot down; Serbs reportedly overrun Gorazde

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) aircraft were again drawn into a shooting war in Bosnia on Saturday amid reports that Serb tanks had overrun the embattled Muslim pocket of Gorazde.

The United Nations said a British Harrier jump-jet was shot down over the encircled town, while the BBC World Service Radio reported that U.S. A-10 tank-busting aircraft had been ordered to attack Bosnian Serb armour in the area.

The Sea Harrier was the first aircraft brought down over Bosnia by hostile action since NATO became involved in the two-year-old conflict.

For its part, Muslim-controlled Sarajevo Radio said Serb tanks had broken through into the streets of Gorazde town and were shooting up residential buildings as residents and U.N. workers dived into makeshift shelters.

"There is heavy shelling of Gorazde town itself, including tank fire," a relief worker told Reuters.

Gorazde's 60,000-strong population has lived on the verge of starvation for the best part of two years and has frequently come under attack, lying on the Drina River. It links Serb-held areas of Bosnia with Serbia proper.

Bosnian Muslim government officials said in Sarajevo that the credibility of NATO and the United Nations was at stake after Serbs had ignored warnings to stop their assault

on the U.N. designated "safe area" (see page 6).

The offensive, despite two NATO bombing runs last week, has forced a retreat of Bosnian army soldiers who were outgunned by Serbs closing in from captured suburbs to the north and south Gorazde's defences were crumbling, Sarajevo Radio said.

A U.N. spokesman said the pilot of the Sea Harrier managed to eject before his plane went down.

General Ratko Mladic, commander of the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA), was directing the final assault on Gorazde, according to a Reuters Television crew which filmed him near the front.

Berri stresses need for Arab solidarity

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri arrived in Amman Saturday on an official visit which he described as a "gesture that we must restore solidarity to Arab action" at a crucial time in the history of the region.

Mr. Berri, who is on his first visit to the Kingdom at the invitation of Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Taher Al Masri, said it is important for the two countries to coordinate their stands but refused to say whether he had specific ideas that he would discuss with Jordanian officials during his five-day visit.

"Solidarity at peace time is more needed than at war time... at least we should be able to meet," Mr. Berri said during a meeting with Mr. Masri and other parliamentarians.

Both Mr. Masri and Mr. Berri stressed the need for supporting frontline Arab states at their negotiations with Israel and denying Israel the ability to isolate and deal with each Arab country separately.

Lebanon faced Israel on its own once "and we payed a

price for that. We should not be isolated again," said Mr. Berri, expressing appreciation for Jordan's refusal to enter separate peace agreements with Israel.

Mr. Berri criticised the lack of Arab support for the rebuilding of parts of Southern Lebanon that were destroyed by Israel, saying "South Lebanon is being treated as if it was part of northern Israel and not southern Lebanon."

"The Israeli enemy stabs in one side and negotiates with the other. We are not united at either front," Mr. Berri said during the meeting.

The Lebanese leader warned of Israeli plans to settle Palestinian refugees in their host countries, saying that Jordan and Lebanon are particularly concerned with these plans which "are a conspiracy against Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians."

Mr. Masri, who welcomed Mr. Berri to Jordan as a "prominent national Arab figure," stressed that "our concerns in Jordan do not pertain to Jordan only but to the rest of the Arab World and we

(Continued on page 5)

U.N. aid arrives in chaotic Kigali

NAIROBI (Agencies) — The United Nations flew in food and medicine for famine-stricken Rwandans fleeing bloodthirsty mobs Saturday as the last European troops hastened their departure.

The army and rebels battling for control of Kigali agreed to make the airport a neutral zone so supplies can be brought in, said Dr. Abdul Kabia, director of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Rwanda.

Mortar duels between army and rebel troops had splintered the tarmac with shrapnel on Friday. The airport and Kigali were quiet overnight but a half-hour gunbattle broke out downtown around 4 p.m., Dr. Kabia said.

Some 800 Belgian paratroopers left by Friday night, and 420 Belgian U.N. peacekeepers were handing over control of the airport to about 400 Ghanaian troops. The last Belgians were to depart by Monday.

The first C-130 transport arrived with aid Saturday and U.N. officials were arranging convoys to cart the food and medicine to the national stadium and King Faisal Hospital, where about 12,000 people were camped out with little to eat or drink.

Murderous gangs prowled Nyanbo, an industrial section of Kigali, butchering people

with machetes and tossing hand grenades into houses, Dr. Kabia said.

The United Nations is trying to arrange the burial of thousands of corpses accumulated in the area since killings began April 6 following the mysterious plane crash death of Juvenal Habyarimana, the Rwandan president.

"We have heard of terrible massacres in Nyanbo and propose that the bodies be disposed of in a dignified manner," Dr. Kabia said.

Most of the victims were members of the Tutsi minority slaughtered by Hutu gang members and Hutu-dominated government forces. The rebels who pushed into Kigali on Tuesday are predominantly Tutsi.

Tens of thousands of people have died in the warfare and ethnic butchery that has its roots in a centuries-old struggle for power in Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

Representatives of the army and rebel forces have held their first face-to-face meeting to explore terms for a ceasefire while fighting still raged for control of the capital Kigali, the U.N. said.

The U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) said officers from the army and the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) met at a secret location.

Algeria announces new government

TUNIS (R) — Algeria's new Prime Minister Mokdad Sifi, faced with growing political violence, has announced a new government from which the hardline anti-Islamist interior minister was excluded.

Mr. Sifi took power last Monday after President Liamine Zouari dismissed his predecessor Redha Malek, an avowed opponent of dialogue with Muslim fundamentalists whom Algerian officials blame for more than two years of violence.

More than 3,500 people have been killed since January 1992 in violence which erupted after the authorities cancelled a general election which the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

Algerian state radio said Interior Minister Salim Saadi had been replaced by Abdul Rahman Meziane Cherif in the changes, which increased ministerial and junior ministers' posts to 28 from 24.

There was no mention of any change in the key defence portfolio, currently held by the president himself.

Eight ministers, including Foreign Minister Mohammad Salah Dembri, kept their posts. The others were the ministers of war veterans, the habitat, youth and sport, professional training, transport, telecommunications, and justice.

The retention of Justice Minister Mokdad Tegui appeared a sign that, despite the dropping of the interior minister, a hard line would continue against fundamentalists already accused of violence.

Mr. Tegui's department manages the three special courts, set up in late 1992 to combat the Islamists, which have sentenced scores of people to death.

An exiled leader of the FIS said earlier this week the party would look carefully at the new government's composition to see whether there was a change of dialogue to end the civil strife.

"Concerning the appointment of Mr. Mokdad Sifi, he is a man unknown in political circles, a technocrat, we are waiting to see the composition of his government to tell what the regime's intentions and policy are," FIS spokesman Rabah Kebir said.

Mr. Sifi moved several ministers to other departments, including former Economy Minister Mourad Benachouba, the architect of reforms linked to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, who was named industrial restructuring minister.

This is a new post set up to tackle liberalisation of the state industrial sector ahead of partial privatisation.

Former Economy Minister Ahmad Benbitour was appointed finance minister, a portfolio that has not existed in recent governments. He was replaced at the energy ministry by Amar Makhloufi.

Mohamed Benamar Zerhouni was named communications minister, a post which has been vacant since the former incumbent quit last year.

A woman, Leila Laslaoui, a high-profile leader of anti-



Lamine Zouari

Islamist activists in Algeria, enters the government as secretary of state charged with national solidarity and the family.

Moroccans offer mediation

Moroccan opposition groups offered on Friday to mediate in Algeria's two-year-long political violence and called for "national reconciliation" in the country.

In a statement, Morocco's old guard Istiqlal Party, the Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP) and the leftist Democratic Organisation of People's Action (ODAP) said: "National reconciliation is a responsibility of Algerians who are worried about their country's future. It is the only solution to avoid the worst dangers."

"We are ready to take any action which our Algerian brothers think might facilitate dialogue and lead to national reconciliation," the group said.

U.S. rejects Libyan proposal for Hague trial

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The U.S. government rejected on Friday Libya's proposal that suspects in the bombing of Pan American Flight 103 be tried in the Hague, headquarters of the International Court of Justice.

"We have concluded that this proposal does not fulfill the demands of (U.N. Security Council resolutions) which require: That Libya turn over the suspects for trial in the United States or the United Kingdom," said State Department spokesman Michael McCurry.

Libya had proposed that they be tried by Scottish judges applying Scottish law on the premises of the International Court of Justice.

"Libya has flouted these requirements by repeatedly trying to evade, ignore, or undermine them," Mr. McCurry said.

The United States, France, and Great Britain remain committed to gaining full Libyan compliance.

A bomb caused Pan Am 103 to explode Dec. 21, 1988, on a flight to New York and crash into Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 people aboard and 11 on the ground. After exhaustive investigation, the United States accused and indicted two Libyans for the bombing, which contributed to eventual financial collapse of one of the world's pioneer airlines.

One State Department official, who asked not to be quoted by name, said the latest proposal was the closest so far to meeting the Security Council's requirements.

Vigils on Libyan coast

Libyans stood vigil along the country's coast on Friday in a

symbolic challenge to the United States, marking the eighth anniversary of the U.S. bombing raid on their country.

The official Libyan news agency JANA said followers of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi stood vigil at 0200 local time (0100 GMT) "in a challenge to the U.S. arrogance and as a tangible act in the historic stand the Libyan people take against the new crusader's attack."

On April 15, 1986, U.S. planes flying from British bases and U.S. aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean bombed targets in Tripoli and Benghazi, including Colonel Qadhafi's Tripoli home. Libya said more than 40 people were killed, nearly all civilians.

Washington said the raid was in response to an explosion at a West Berlin discotheque in which two Americans were killed. The United States blamed

Libya but Libya denied it was responsible.

U.N. flight authorised

The Security Council has authorised a U.N. plane to fly a reconnaissance team into Libya to prepare for the possible U.N. supervision of the withdrawal of Libya from the Aouzou Strip.

The council voted unanimously April 14 to exempt U.N. aircraft from the ban it imposed in March 1992 on all air traffic to and from Libya. The council imposed mandatory worldwide air, arms and diplomatic sanctions against Libya until it complies with the requests of the United States, Britain and France in establishing responsibility for the terrorist bombings of Pan Am flight 103 and UTA flight 772. The reconnaissance team is

being sent by Secretary General Boutros Ghali to conduct a brief survey of conditions in the Aouzou Strip so that it can prepare recommendations for the council on the U.N. role in supervising Libya's withdrawal from the territory.

The Aouzou Strip was the subject of conflicting claims by Libya and Chad. On April 15, both countries accepted the judgement of the International Court of Justice which recognises Chad's claim to the land.

Under the agreement signed by Chad and Libya, U.N. observers are to participate in the entire operation and verify it is completed. The withdrawal was to begin April 15 under the supervision of a team of 25 Chadian officers, 25 Libyan officers, and U.N. observers. The operation is to end by May 30.

Turkey projects itself as bulwark

NEW YORK (AP) — Warning that Islamic fundamentalism is at Europe's doorstep, the Turkish prime minister on Friday touted her inflation-plagued country as a democratic bulwark against religious extremism.

Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said that the world's one billion Muslims can follow one of two political paths.

"There is the Turkish, democratic secular way and there is the model of Khomenei," Ms. Ciller said, referring to the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who installed a fundamentalist state.

Ms. Ciller made her remarks in English in a keynote address to the Turkish-American Friendship Council, an organisation that promotes business and other ties between the United States and Turkey.

Ms. Ciller, who is the Muslim country's first female prime minister, said that Islamic fundamentalism is "bound to increase" in countries that cannot provide economic opportunity to their people.

Inflation in Turkey is currently running at 80 per cent, she said. "To revive the economy and brake inflation, Ankara will cut spending and privatise billions of dollars of

government-owned industry, she pledged.

A U.S.-trained economist, Ms. Ciller is on a visit to New York and Washington to seek backing for the Turkish economy from the United States and the International Monetary Fund.

The prime minister said that Europe and the U.S. have a vital stake in Turkey's long-term political and economic health.

"If Turkey fails, then fundamentalism will reach the borders of Europe," Ms. Ciller said.

She met Thursday with President Bill Clinton to discuss U.S. planes shooting down two U.S. helicopters in Iraq. Three Turkish officers were among the 26 killed in the mistaken attack.

Talking briefly with reporters after her speech Friday, she said the matter would be fully investigated. She said the attack would not affect Turkey's relations with the United States or its European allies.

Ms. Ciller also praised the U.S. involvement in the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ms. Ciller and her Pakistani counterpart, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, made a dramatic trip to the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo in

February to publicise the plight of Muslims there.

Prayers open assembly

Tayyip Erdogan, the new Islamic fundamentalist mayor, opened the first session of Istanbul's new assembly Friday with prayers from the Holy Koran.

Some assembly members, representing mainstream parties, protested and demanded that the customary moment of silence in memory of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, should be held.

Fundamentalists despise Ataturk for his secular reforms in the predominantly Muslim country and also consider holding a moment of silence to be a Christian custom.

Erdogan and other Muslim fundamentalist assembly members reluctantly stood up when other members sang the national anthem dating back from the days of Ataturk.

The fundamentalist Welfare Party made a strong showing in the nationwide local elections March 27 and captured the mayorships in several cities, including Istanbul, the country's largest city, and Ankara, the state capital.

U.S. blunder in Iraq may spur ID electronics spending

NEW YORK (R) — The downing in Iraq of U.S. helicopters by American jets may eventually spur increased spending on electronic identification systems for the U.S. military, analysts and academics say.

Thursday's downing, which killed 26 people on two helicopters, follows fatalities in the 1991 Gulf war against Iraq, in which one out four Americans who died in combat were killed by "friendly fire."

"The big problem is the increasing complexity of weapons, the increasing lethality of weapons at long distances, and the speed of battles," said David Skaggs, a history professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

Electronic identification systems, or IFF (identification, friend or foe), help combatants discern enemy from ally and played a vital role in the high-tech Gulf war.

Mystery still surrounds the cause of Thursday's blunder but Pentagon officials Friday disclosed that the helicopters were indeed operating electronic signal equipment that should have identified them immediately to any approaching aircraft.

"I think the only enduring effect that this might have is that spending on IFF might be upped," said analyst Peter Aseritis.

The U.S. military now largely depends on electronic identification system a decade or more old and have not been a major contender for significant U.S. budget allotments since the Reagan administration, Mr. Aseritis said.

Mr. Aseritis said a thorough overhaul of U.S. electronic identification systems for the military could require billions

of dollars in government money but was unlikely to occur for several years at least.

"The Clinton budget calls for military decreases for two, three, four or five years," Mr. Aseritis said.

Leader in military electronics such as avionics have generally fared better than most defence-related industries in the Pentagon cutbacks begun in the 1980s and include firms such as Raytheon, Loral Corp and Martin Marietta, Mr. Aseritis said.

Kent Newcomb at A.G. Edwards and other analysts said the helicopters downing was unlikely to affect overseas sales of U.S. military equipment or have short-term effects on military suppliers.

"The problem of identification in battle has always been with us," said Mr. Skaggs. "That's why soldiers of different countries were different colours."

2 victims identified

A decorated U.S. diplomat who served extensively in the Middle East was among those killed in the downing of the two U.S. helicopters over Iraq, the State Department announced Friday.

Spokesman Mike McCurry said career diplomat Barbara Schell was an area specialist serving as foreign policy adviser to the commanding general of Operation Provide Comfort, the U.N. humanitarian effort for Iraqi Kurds.

She was among the first two Americans identified Friday as victims of Thursday's incident. The Pentagon said one of the other 14 Americans who died in the helicopters was 2nd Lieutenant Laura Ashley Piper, 25, of Venice, Florida. She was assigned to the U.S. 7454th tactical intelligence

squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Five Kurds, three Turkish military officers, two British officers and a French officer were also among the 26 victims.

Schell's career included a succession of difficult and sometimes dangerous assignments, the State Department said. She was cited for heroism during her service at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iran, during its occupation by militants in 1979.

Schell, who joined the foreign service in 1966, was also cited for her work in helping to address the needs of U.S. citizens evacuating from Iran in that period.

"The Department of State is deeply saddened at the death in action in northern Iraq April 14th of foreign service officer Barbara L. Schell," Mr. McCurry told reporters.

"Those who knew her here... described her as an independent, adventuresome person who had very much wanted the job that she was serving in. She had been very excited by the challenge that this job offered. She was known to her friends as someone with a dry sense of humour and a very warm spirit," he said.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher met Schell last August when he was in Alexandria, Egypt, where she was serving as consul general.

"The secretary, along with many others here in the department, have been in touch with Barbara's family to express their deepest condolences, and of course, on behalf of the department, I express my condolences to Ms. Schell's family," Mr. McCurry said.

UAE keen to end Iran dispute

DESPITE the cancellation of talks between the United Arab Emirates and Iran last year over the quest for a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb, government officials in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi are still keen to press ahead with attempts to resolve the issue, reports a special correspondent.

Informed sources suggest that the government remains committed to the principle of direct talks and negotiations with Iran but insists that any such talks should not take place within the framework of the usual bilateral discussions, but are actually centred on the issue of the islands.

Iran and the emirate of Sharjah signed a memorandum of understanding on Abu Musa in November 1971, which has subsequently been broken by Iran, while the two Tunbs were invaded by Iranian forces shortly before the British withdrew from the Gulf in December 1971.

At the last meeting between the two sides the Iranians refused to discuss the question of sovereignty over the Tunbs, or that of Iranian adherence to the terms of the memorandum of understanding on the administration of the island of Abu

Musa.

During the 1970s, the UAE kept relatively quiet on the issue, partly because of a recognition that Iran, with its internal turmoil and then the war with Iraq, was not likely to respond in a positive manner. It never relinquished, however, its claim to the islands, and, say officials, the patience has now worn very thin.

Last year's talks in Abu Dhabi were supposed to be followed by a visit to Tehran by UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan Ben Zayed Al Nahayeh, but this was cancelled at short notice, because of an Iranian refusal to discuss the question of the sovereignty of the islands.

Since then, UAE officials have stressed publicly that they are quite happy either to enter into direct talks with Iran, or to have the issue taken to an international forum like the International Court of Justice or the United Nations, as a part of a process of pursuing a peaceful and diplomatic path towards achieving a resolution of the issue.

Political observers in Abu Dhabi note that the UAE government has also avoided entangling the topic with other issues, or broadening its scope. The question of other Gulf islands to which the UAE

could present a legitimate historical claim, for example, has not been officially raised, even though Abu Musa and both Greater and Lesser Tunb had belonged to Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah since long before the emergence of the present day state of Iran and the ancestors of today's Rulers had ruled the territory on the Iranian coast, as well as a number of other islands, as far back as the eighteenth century.

Observers and visitors to the area sense a feeling of scepticism among the top UAE officials about statements from Iran about their willingness to talk, feeling that the continued refusal of Iran even to discuss the question of sovereignty makes it difficult to accept their protestations of being concerned about the maintenance of security and the collective interests of the states in the area. "From the start, their actions have told, and continue to tell a different tale," concludes one well-informed source. "The whole issue, and Iran's failure to make any positive gestures towards a settlement, remain underlying factors affecting the development of Iran's relations with the rest of the Gulf."

Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding Bulletin.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Denmark backtracks on signing ceremony

COPENHAGEN (AP) — Government officials acknowledged that the foreign minister was prematurely optimistic when he announced a weekend signing ceremony in Copenhagen of an agreement on foreign observers for Hebron. Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen said Tuesday that representatives of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Norway and Italy would sign an agreement this weekend to establish the foreign observers in Hebron, site of the Feb. 25 mosque massacre of more than 30 Palestinians. But Helveg Petersen is not waiting around Copenhagen for his guests to arrive. He left for Abu Dhabi, for discussions with the United Arab Emirates this weekend. Before leaving, the minister's secretary, Uffe Balslev, said the signing ceremony announcement had been made with "some reservations" and was perhaps a little "optimistic." Government sources who spoke on condition of anonymity said aspects of the mission are still being discussed by Norway, Denmark and Italy, who will provide the 160 observers.

Iran vaccinates millions against polio

NICOSIA (R) — Hundreds of thousands of health workers and volunteers trooped door to door in Iran Friday in a one-day campaign to vaccinate all children under five against polio. President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani symbolically joined the campaign, administering the orally taken vaccine to several children at a central Tehran health centre, Tehran Radio said. It said 350,000 members of the Basij paramilitary force were trained to join tens of thousands of health workers, medical students and volunteers for the unprecedented drive. Officials hope an intensive television advertisement campaign will help them reach nearly all the country's 10 million children under five — six million in cities and four million in rural areas. Health Minister Alireza Maraghi told Tehran Radio that preliminary results were encouraging. Some major cities reported 50 per cent or more vaccinated by early afternoon. Iranian health officials say preventive measures have helped reduce reported cases of polio, a viral infection which can lead to paralysis and death in children, to 25 a year.

Rabin viewed jurists as obstacle

Tel Aviv (AP) As Defence Minister at the start of the Palestinian uprising, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin constantly upbraided jurists for obstructing operations that could have suppressed the violence, a former general says. Reserve Brigadier General Amnon Strashnov, military attorney general during first years of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the occupied territories, made the observation in a chapter of his book that appeared in the daily Yedioth Ahronoth Friday. The book, "Justice Under Fire," was published by the newspaper. In the chapter that appeared Friday, Mr. Strashnov wrote that Mr. Rabin pressured legal advisors for the judicial solutions that would allow him to execute his objectives. When denied he would consent, "with or without a comment about how jurists were a permanent obstacle in putting down the intifada," Strashnov did not say what operations had to be cancelled because of lack of legal backing. Mr. Rabin served as defence minister from 1984 to 1990. The intifada broke out in December 1987. Mr. Rabin's orders to "break the bones" of Palestinian demonstrators instead of shooting them backfired when soldiers interpreted them as a license to break the bones of unarmed Palestinians.

Kidnappers release Chinese hostages in Yemen

SANAA (R) — Yemeni tribesmen have freed two Chinese technicians who were kidnapped nearly two weeks ago, Chinese sources in Sanaa said Friday. The sources said one hostage was freed one day after being kidnapped on April 3 and the other was released on Thursday. The men were seized by members of a tribe objecting to the building of a road in their region.

King urges Saudis to pray for rain

DUBAI (R) — King Fahd urged Saudi Arabians to pray next Monday for rain in the kingdom. In a palace statement, carried by the Saudi Press Agency, the king called for the nation-wide prayers "due to the delay in rainfall and the need of the country and people for that."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Monde Est A Vous
19:00 News in French
19:15 Faut Pas Réver
19:30 News in Hebrew
19:45 Zeeq
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 You Bet Your Life
21:10 Stockholm Lives
22:00 News in English
22:30 The Upper Hand

PRAYER TIMES

04:39 Fajr
05:07 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:35 Asr
16:12 Maghreb
18:30 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632765
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terassas Church Tel. 623666

Church of the Annunciation Tel.

623441
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775251
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assiout International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Relative warm weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds becoming northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be southerly moderate and seas rough.
Min./Max. temp. 15/28
Aqaba 20/35
Deserts 14/31

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

Jordan Valley 18/33

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 30, Aqaba 35 Humidity readings: Amman 17 per cent, Aqaba 21 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Walid Masi 675485
Dr. Ramzi Masi 794788
Dr. Khalil Jall 740740
Dr. Mohammad Omran 612232
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 783636
Al Asmaa pharmacy 637055
Najroukh pharmacy 626372
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Shamoun pharmacy 676460
Najroukh pharmacy 626372
Najib pharmacy 647632
DRBID:
Dr. Ali Shugairi 246140
Aqaba pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Fire Brigade 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 801228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630331
Hotel Complaints 630390
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 0272555
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381322
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 6442816
Akhil Maternity, J. Amn 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malha, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 6641714
Samsi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845485
Al-Mustashir Hospital 6672273
The Islamic, Abdali 66612737
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6661648
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 771015
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77111128
Army, Marka 891611515
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Aqaba Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)98323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al-Hikma Modern Hospital (09)99990
BRID:
Princess Sumay Hospital (02)72555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)72775
Ibn Al-Nafis Hospital (02)947100
Aqaba:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)31411

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. (08)3220-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Bangkok (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:30 Agaba (RJ)
10:00 Jeddah (RJ)
10:30 Larnaca (CY)
10:30 Doha, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00 Beirut (RJ)
11:20 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:45 New York/Antarctica (RJ)
17:25 Agaba (RJ)
18:25 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
18:55 London (RJ)
19:00 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:30 Athens (RJ)
20:00 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
21:00 Bangkok (RJ)
21:00 Vienna (RJ)
21:00 Rome (RJ)
21:00 Agaba (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

13:25 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:25 Moscow (SU)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fits per kg.

Apple 530/630
Banana 280/320
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Cabbage 250/320
Carrot 180/220
Cauliflower 180/220
Cucumbers (large) 300/350
Cucumbers (small) 300/350
Eggplant 300/350
Garlic 300/350
Grape Fruit 900/1000
Green beans 300/350
Lemon 140/170
Marrow (large) 180/220
Marrow (small) 300/350
Mukhallah 300/350
Orange 300/350
Onion (dry) 300/350
Onion (green) 280/320
Peas 600/650
Pepper (hot) 600/650
Pepper (sweet) 520/5



PAKISTANI-JORDANIAN TRADE TALKS: Minister of Industry and Trade Rima Khalaf Saturday receives Pakistani Minister of Industry and Production Mohammad Asghar who arrived in Amman on a four-day visit to Jordan. Mr. Asghar said he planned to have talks with government officials on further bolstering trade and economic relations. He said in a statement upon arrival that his discussions with officials here will also cover cooperation and joint ventures mainly in phosphate and fertilizer industries, according to the Jordan News Agency.

cy, Petra. The Pakistani government, he said, is ready to cooperate with Jordan in launching joint ventures benefiting the two countries' economies. According to Sameh Madani, director general of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC), Jordan and Pakistan are currently involved in implementing two joint ventures, one in Pakistan to produce diammonium phosphate and the other in Jordan to produce phosphoric acid, both used in the production of fertilizers (Petra photo)

Suspects in subversion plots rise to 35 Police confirm arrest of 2 more men in bomb blast case

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police have arrested the leader and a member of a group affiliated with the so-called Arab Afghans after a chase and gunfight in Amman, security sources said Saturday.

They confirmed a report in the local press that a 38-year-old man identified as the head of the group described as religious extremists who sought to undermine national security and a member of the faction were detained on Thursday.

The sources identified the leader by his initials as W.I. and said his arrest was a major breakthrough in investigations into a series of sabotage and attempted sabotage in the country over the past few months.

A car used by the two was intercepted after a chase and gunfight during which a policeman was wounded in the leg, the report said. The

vehicle yielded an assortment of weapons, it said. Investigations were continuing.

Friday's arrests raised the number of suspects detained in connection with extremist plots in the past few months to 35. Twenty-three of them were earlier expected to be put on trial in mid-April charged with plotting and carrying out subversion through bombings at public places.

But, with the new arrests, it is expected all the 35 could be put on trial together as a single group, the sources said.

Most of the suspects have confessed and retracted the crimes and attempted crimes in the presence of prosecutors, security officials said.

The trial was expected to start in mid-April, but investigations and gathering of evidence are continuing. "It might take some weeks before the cases are sent to court," said one source.

Details of the charges faced by others and the time

of their arrests remained sketchy, but the sources affirmed that there was enough evidence to prove that most of them had plotted to destabilise security and create chaos in the country.

It was also not clear whether all the suspects were linked with each other. The sources said there appeared to be two or three small groups operating independently of each other, possibly under orders from a single faction or individual.

However, one of the threads that bound all was their background as "Arab Afghans" — volunteers who fought with the Afghan Mujahideen against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan — or affiliation with them, according to the sources.

Apart from the 23 who are expected to go on trial soon, at least 10 others are reported to be members of a shadowy organisation calling itself "Jihad Islami Organisation," whose leader was arrested on Friday.

The group's members had carried out several hold-ups of taxi drivers and other places and were planning to rob banks to raise funds to buy arms before they were arrested, reports said.

Parliament members representing the Islamic Action Front (IAF) met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali last week with an appeal for the release of some of the detainees, whose number they put at 73.

According to the sources, some of those who fought in Afghanistan were detained for interrogation immediately upon their return home over the past months. It was not immediately clear whether prosecutors had been able to establish any link between them and those who were arrested in connection with the bombings and attempted attacks in Jordan.

IAF officials stressed that they were not intervening on behalf of any of those who were found to have been

involved in subversion, but that many of the detainees were innocent of any crime and therefore should be released.

Most of the "Arab Afghans" are believed to be ex-members of the Muslim Brotherhood who broke away in protest against the moderate policies followed by the leadership, experts on Jordanian Islamic movements say.

"Although they are no longer active members, the Brotherhood has no choice but to intervene on their behalf to protect its own image with the rank and file," said an expert and long-time observer of the movement.

Senior Brotherhood leaders have dismissed as baseless reports in Europe-based Arabic-language magazines that some of the suspects were directly linked to the movement. The Brotherhood might even file lawsuits against those magazines for defamation, the leaders said.

Canadian official describes Jordan as 'key learning, listening post'

By Ian Atalla
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Recent events in the Middle East and Jordan's strategic front-line position at the centre of the region have made the Kingdom "a key learning and listening post" for foreign affairs experts from other countries, T.C. Hammond, vice commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) of Canada, told the Jordan Times Saturday.

Mr. Hammond arrived in Jordan at the head of a 13-member delegation from the college last Thursday.

The vice commandant said he felt that it was too early to comment on what the delegation's final impressions would

be after its visit, but the initial ones are "of guarded optimism and hope that for the first time, there may be promising developments in the future towards peace in the region."

"We thought it was especially important to visit Jordan at this time," he added, "and we find that Jordanian experts and officials are able to give us very good insights into the hopes and discouragements of the region."

The delegation, comprised of the NDC's Middle East and African Affairs Study Group, will also visit Israel "to get a view of both sides to the equation of the conflict," he said, adding that previously, the delegation had visited Morocco and Kenya as part of their current tour.

The NDC provides advanced training programmes in foreign affairs issues to senior-level Canadian government officials and military officers, and Mr. Hammond emphasised that the delegation's tour of Jordan is "primarily a study visit."

So far in Jordan, the group had an intensive briefing from Jordan's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, officers of the Jordanian Armed Forces and officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The group will also meet with Canada's Ambassador to Jordan Andrew Robinson, and will continue to meet with senior Jordanian officials until it leaves Monday. Mr. Hammond said.

Radio station planned for farming audience

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Preparations are under way for opening an agricultural radio station at Deir Alla in the Central Jordan Valley to offer information and educational programmes to local farmers, according to Ibrahim Shahzadeh, acting director general of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation.

Special programmes mainly benefiting the farmers in the Jordan Valley will be aired by this small F.M. station which is expected to go on the air during the second half of this year, Mr. Shahzadeh told the Jordan Times Saturday.

Five employees from the Ministry of Agriculture have been trained to prepare and present the radio programmes.

said Mr. Shahzadeh.

The Deir Alla station, which would be the first of its kind in the Arab World dedicated to agriculture, will help solve farmers' problems and direct them to the appropriate institutions and officials for assistance, he said.

According to Mr. Shahzadeh, the corporation is planning another F.M. broadcasting service from Amman aimed at the younger listening audiences in the Greater Amman region.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture is preparing a training seminar to open Monday to help Jordan Valley farmers rid their farms of rodents.

Agriculture Minister Mahdi Farhan will open the three-day event which will be attended by 12 agricultural extension service employees.

Flights to and from Japan not expected before year end

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Despite the signing of an agreement in Amman last week, opening the way for Royal Jordanian (RJ) the national airline, to fly to Japan, actual flights are not expected to start before the end of the year, according to Ahmad Jweiber, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

He told the Jordan Times that by signing the agreement, the CAA and the Japanese government have paved the ground for RJ and the Japanese Airlines (JAL) to conduct feasibility studies and start direct flights between Amman and Osaka.

Mr. Jweiber said he believed that RJ was more interested,

for the time being, in starting its flights to Japan before JAL, but the agreement is open for either side to start the flights operations.

Mr. Jweiber and Japan's Ambassador to Jordan Yuji Ikeda signed the accord at a ceremony held at the Queen Alia International Airport Wednesday afternoon. CAA said that the signing was the final step towards opening the way for regular commercial flights between Japan and Jordan.

The long-awaited agreement, which is a result of negotiations that have been going on between CAA and the Japanese government since last December, paves the way for RJ to fly to Kansai International Airport in Osaka, the second largest city in Japan,

said the CAA director.

He said that Jordan has become the first country in the region to have this kind of agreement with Japan and thus, Amman is expected to become the hub for tourists and cargo to and from Japan in the region.

Kansai Airport, which will be formally opened in September this year, is located on the outskirts of Osaka and has been designed to be in service 24 hours, said the official.

Kansai is to function as a terminal for both international and domestic air routes, he added.

Japanese and Jordanian officials expressed hope that the signing would open a new page in the history of the friendly relations between the two countries.

The Modern String Quartet and its original, sophisticated jazz

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Continuing the exceptional series of concerts they are presenting this April, the National Music Conservatory (NMC) — Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHFF), this time in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut in Amman, will introduce the Modern String Quartet this evening at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) for a single performance.

If the name of the quartet gives no indication of the kind of music the group plays, neither will the names of the instruments — violins, viola and cello. The four musicians from Germany, Jörg Widmeyer, Winfried Zrenner, Andreas Horchelt and Jost Becker actually play an original and sophisticated form of jazz.

Having received a sound academic musical education, like most jazz musicians today, the members of the Modern String Quartet write their personal arrangements of well-known pieces, this in addition to originals of their own.

Their last album "Four Brothers" includes amazing renditions of the piece bearing the same title by the Manhattan Transfer, the famous "Spinning Wheel" written back in the early seventies by the jazz-rock group Blood



The Modern String Quartet
Sweat & Tears, as well as the "Dolphin Dance" from Herbie Hancock's landmark album "Maiden Voyage."

The usual drum, bass and other functions found in a traditional jazz band are cleverly redistributed among the four string instruments of the quartet. Yet, in spite of the undeniable jazz feeling, the blue notes, the rhythmic structures and the daring harmonies, the

sound of the quartet, because of the inherent characteristics of the strings timbre, is sometimes very classical.

The overall result is a very jazzy type of contemporary classical music.

The concert at the RCC will include pieces by the great Duke Ellington, George Gershwin, Charles Mingus, Stevie Wonder and some of the quartet's compositions.

Activist says little is being done about children's rights

By Natasha Bukhari
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's children are falling victim to exploitation in the absence of parental and governmental supervision and "a lot is being said about human rights, but it is all empty talk," charged human rights activist Saleem Sweis.

In the past few years, child labour has become a widespread phenomenon. Children as young as 10-years-old are being employed at minimal wages and long hours, seven days a week.

"Some children are working harder than adults do, yet they are being exploited as they have no unions or rights," said Mr. Sweis. He added that despite the "superficial" propaganda that calls for securing children's

rights in the country, no measures are being taken to that effect.

According to a 1993 human rights report on Jordan, published by the U.S. State Department, discrimination against children in Jordan is rare, and Jordan being a signatory to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, prohibits the employment of children under the age of 16.

Still, the country is witnessing an alarming increase in employment of under age children, child street peddlers, child beggars and violent crimes being committed against children.

When asked for a possible explanation, Mr. Sweis told the Jordan Times that the reason behind this "painful reality" is the failure of the

country's official institutions to provide the required supervision on applying child protection laws.

"The Public Security Department (PSD), the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education are neglecting children's rights," charged Mr. Sweis pointing to child labour, child beggars, child abuse, murder and the school drop-out rate.

He added that the problem goes beyond governmental negligence and that it is a reflection of the country's growing social and familial disintegration. The human rights activist accused many parents of ignoring their children and not providing them with proper care.

This is causing some children to indulge in "evil" practices, said Mr. Sweis, cit-

ing as evidence the growing number of thefts, crimes and drug addiction among Jordan's youth.

Poverty is another cause for some children dropping out of school.

Children, especially boys are maturing too early, said Mr. Sweis, adding that boys are leaving school at a very early age to help their parents financially. In many cases a father's wages are hardly sufficient to feed his family, and this harsh reality prompts the children to assume premature responsibility as bread winners.

The Ministry of Social Development has set up a committee to address the problem and in most cases removes the children from the streets, returns them to their families, and provides them

with a monthly stipend.

Earlier this year, the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Amman had a two-day meeting in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development to review and evaluate UNICEF programmes in Jordan.

The meeting aimed at coming up with a course of action for achieving the global-mid-decade goals and the goals of Jordan's National Plan of Action (NPA), and ensuring the complementarity of the various governmental organisations (NGOs) and other partners.

According to Mr. Sweis, the different meetings and decisions taken to secure children's rights are nothing but words, because, in reality, he added, none of these decisions are implemented.

Hotel occupancy hits peak

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Jordanian (RJ) Alia Gateway Hotel had an occupancy rate of 81.3 per cent in 1993, the highest occupancy rate among Jordanian hotels. Director General of the hotel Nazih Al Dabbas said the hotel had hosted 989,713 passengers since it was opened in 1985. The hotel which was suffering financial problems in its first three years, since 1989 earned JD 1,193,150.

CDD warns against fires at the outset of summer

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Summer is around the corner, and it is the season when most fires are bound to destroy forests and dry weeds, said the Civil Defence Department (CDD), in a pamphlet issued to increase public awareness to the danger of fire. Forests in Jordan cover 750,000 dunums of the total of 90 million dunums in the Kingdom, says the leaflet.

According to statistics by the Ministry of Agriculture, yearly fires claim 30,000 trees of the total of 40 million trees in Jordan.

CDD Public Relations Director Abdul Raouf Ma'aytah called on citizens to take extra precautions in the summer and to cut the grass on their lands and in the vicinity of their houses to prevent fires from happening.

Capt. Ma'aytah said that the number one reason for forest

fires is cigarettes.

According to CDD statistics last year, there were 4,372 fires, out of which 775 were caused by tossed lit cigarettes or matches. Also 1,930 fires destroyed dry weeds, crops and forests, a 44.2 per cent of the total numbers of destructive fires.

Arson came in second, according to Capt. Ma'aytah, with 553 cases, making up a 12.2 per cent.

"Some individuals set lands

on fire to expand their fields, or for other reasons," he said.

Moreover, Capt. Ma'aytah pointed out that broken pieces of glass in the grass are an important factor in starting fire. "The pieces of glass reflect the sun's rays and cause the grass to burn," he explained.

He said most other cases result from negligence on the part of people who picnic and leave their fire behind them.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Queen attends museum gathering in Washington

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Friday attended the annual gathering of the National Museum of Women in the Arts to promote the exhibition of Arab women artists on display at the museum in Washington, D.C., according to a Jordan Information Bureau statement Saturday. Queen Noor is the chairperson of the honorary board of trustees of the International Council of Women in the Arts which supports and promotes the work of Arab women artists and which has organised the exhibition in Washington. The exhibition features the works of artists from 21 Arab countries, including those of a number of Jordanian artists, and will tour several cities. Queen Noor, who will be in Washington for several days, will also address the Meridian International Centre Tuesday on the modern development of Jordan and issues of regional concern, said the statement.

Food supplies donated to Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Health Saturday sent trucks loaded with food supplies and medicine as a gift to the Iraqi people. Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas said the trucks, which were carrying 420 boxes of medicine and medical supplies, were sent to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people who are living under U.N. sanctions since Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

WHAT'S GOING ON

THE FIRST QUARTET FESTIVAL

★ "The Modern String Quartet" at the main theatre, the Royal Cultural Centre, at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

★ Lecture in Arabic entitled "Parliamentary Experience in Iraq: Roots and Developments" by Dr. Muzaffar Al Adhami at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:00 p.m.

FILM

★ Film entitled "Give 'Em Hell, Harry" at the American Center at 5:00 p.m. (100 minutes).

EXHIBITIONS

★ Plastic art exhibition by artist Ali Minurat at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Art exhibition by artist Latifa Youssef at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition by artists Alia Ammoura, Dorothy Mango, Hind Naser, Janice Saaf, Lucy Marto, Tete Wegelius at Ab'ad

Art Gallery (10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.) (Tel. 819861).

★ Exhibition of calligraphy at Orfali Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).

★ Paintings exhibition by Jordanian and Lebanese artists Jamal Khamis and Jehad Abu Suleiman at Alia Art Gallery (9:30 - 13:30, 15:00-18:00) (Tel. 639303).

★ Graphics exhibition by artist Burhan Saleh Mohammad at the Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).

★ Book exhibition at the International Exhibition Centre, University Road.

★ Engraving exhibition by artist Jean-Pierre Pincemin at the French Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at the Italian Language Centre (9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 669348).

★ Jordanian-Iraqi contemporary exhibition by over 80 artists at Alia Art Gallery in Wadi Saqra (9:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 644451).

★ Exhibition of sculptures and drawings by Jordanian sculptor Sumer Tabbas. Also showing "permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists at Darat Al Fuman of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luwelbeh (Tel. 643251/2).

AGRICULTURAL PROFESSIONAL NEEDED

An American consulting firm, in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture will be conducting a series of studies related to the Implementation of Agricultural Policies of Jordan, and is seeking expressions of interest from individuals who are senior professionals with extensive experience in Agricultural Research & Extension as related to the Implementation of Agricultural Policy and to Evaluation of Institutional Capabilities to carry out these policies.

Services will be required on a part-time basis during the approximate period of mid April, 1994 through mid August 1994.

Interested individuals should have excellent writing skills in English and Arabic, and should have experience working with a large professional international team.

Interested parties should submit their current CVs in English to the Administrative Assistant at the National Center for Agricultural Research and Technology Transfer/Technical Assistance and Services Office (TASO), P.O. Box 283 Baqa', Amman - Jordan, no later than 14:00 hours on April 21st 1994.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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Healthy law for our offspring

IT IS high time that Jordan started thinking about new legislation aiming to curb the spread of hereditary diseases. The first order of business is to introduce a new law requiring couples to get medical screening before they tie the knot of matrimony. There is an ongoing policy emerging on this controversial subject that is being articulated by the Ministry of Health in conjunction with Parliament and the Ministry of Awqaf. It appears also that there is a meeting of the minds between the Minister of Health, Dr. Abdul Rahim Malhas, and the chairman of the parliamentary health committee, Dr. Aref Bataineh, on the urgent need to offer coherent guidelines on how to proceed in tackling the issue. What appears to be holding the conclusion of this initiative for now, though, is the final word from the Al Sharia Council on the matter and whether to make the issuance of a medical licence a mandatory step before marriage can be legally sanctioned.

We cannot envisage the religious authorities standing in the way of science and medicine in this field especially when what is being targeted by the proposed new legislation is disease of the kind that can be prevented and avoided. The chairman of the parliamentary legal committee, Sheikh Abdul Baqi Jammo, has already taken a position in favour of making the new rules compulsory after expressing the view that any such move would not be against either Islam or Christianity. All the more so, in fact, since many countries have regulated this aspect of public health by making the application for a medical certificate a routine measure for marriages. By taking this belated step now, Jordan would be just catching up with the rest of the international community in this regard.

We happen to live in a world full of contagious diseases most of which can be passed on to children as well as to non suspecting wives or husbands; AIDS is only the latest plague that has afflicted mankind. How can we then remain silent when a disease of this kind can be passed on to spouses and their offspring as long as a medical licence is not made a prerequisite for marriage. With this in mind, we tend to disagree with the notion currently gaining currency that any such new law does not have to be compulsory. We owe it to our young generation and their children that all necessary measures be taken to protect them from contagious and hereditary diseases. Perhaps adults of marriageable age can assume risks on their own behalf but their children need the protection of the state through laws since they have no say in the matter and remain to be innocent parties to marriage.

Whether we approach this subject from the perspective of the right of the child or the human rights of man and women, the government is duty bound to legislate, and soon, with due credit given to the officials and bodies pressing for it.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

ISRAEL'S ACCUSATIONS that Jordan was allowing Hamas resistance men free movement on its territory came under severe criticism by Al Ra'i Arabic daily Saturday. Israeli leaders' accusations in this respect are totally rejected as those responsible for the recent bomb blasts inside Israel are resistance groups living inside the Israeli-held Arab lands, said the paper. It is true that those sympathisers with Hamas confined that the blasts were the work of Hamas groups, but such support cannot negate the fact that responsibility for the attacks was announced through mosques in Gaza, said the paper. Therefore, it said, any Israeli claims that Jordan was providing free movement for Hamas groups is totally rejected and can only be considered as threats on the part of the Israeli leaders and part of the ongoing pressure and blackmail attempts being exercised on the Kingdom. Israel realises too well that Hamas has no political or military base outside occupied Palestinian land and that sympathy with and support for these groups can by no means indicate that Hamas military presence exists in this country, said the paper. Jordan, it added, rejects these threats and will never succumb to pressure or blackmail of any kind. Delay on the part of Israel to implement U.N. resolution and withdrawal from Arab lands it said, is the real cause for all the Jewish state's problems.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dastour Saturday said that the Arabs have real doubts about repeated American declarations that Washington was committed towards the attainment of peace and would play the role of full partner to achieve that goal. Taher Udwan said the siege on Aqaba and retaining Syria on the list of nations encouraging sets of terrorism and dealing with drugs and at the same time, supplying American war planes, to Israel do not conform to such declarations. Indeed, and under the present circumstances, the peace process is in need of a real miracle to save it from collapse, said the writer. Even if the Palestinians and the Israelis succeed in implementing the Oslo agreement, he said, there can be no real progress on the other tracks unless Israel is truly oriented, by deed rather than word, towards the aspired peace.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Adjustment programme-agenda 1994

IT IS now common knowledge that Jordan is applying an economic adjustment programme, agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), covering seven years 1992-1998. Those who follow up on economic developments in Jordan know what policies were adopted and what measures were taken by the government during the first and second years of the programme, 1992 and 1993.

They also know that the programme has worked beautifully and succeeded as evidenced by the actual performance and the tangible results: Economic growth reached 16 per cent in real terms over the two-year period, economic stability was established, public confidence was enhanced, unemployment was slashed in half, deficit in the budget was curbed, deficit in the balance of payments was reduced and investment in construction, industry and services took off.

However, the Jordanian public opinion should not be behind the course of action, because the people are the means and the objective of the real economic reform. The question therefore is: What precisely are the policies, measures and objectives set for implementation in 1994 according to the latest letter of intent issued by the government.

The salient points on the programme's agenda for 1994 are: — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) will maintain an adequate reserve of free foreign exchange. The objective is to increase reserves before the end of 1994 by at least \$70 million. Any drop of the CBJ reserves in 1994 below the level of Dec. 31, 1993 will be treated as a breach of one of the new conditions of the programme.

— The Central Bank will pursue its efforts to ensure that an effective indirect monetary control system will be fully operational.

— New forms and systems will be introduced to monitor banking activities and sectoral credit.

— Maintaining the ceiling for banking credit of around JD 385 million of extra credit, mainly to the private sector.

— Deficit, before foreign grants, is to be reduced to 5.2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1994, down from 6.2 per cent in 1993.

— Capital expenditure of the central government is to be increased from 7.5 per cent in 1993 to 7.9 per cent in 1994.

— Due to freezing public sector payroll on one hand, and growth of the economy on the other, the relative size of the public sector payroll will be reduced from 7 per cent of GDP in 1993 to 6.7 per cent in 1994.

— Food subsidies, as a percentage of GDP, will decline by 0.2 per cent to become 1 per cent through targeting benefits to the needy segment of the population and price adjustment as a last resort if needed.

— General sales tax (GST) draft was submitted to Parliament in February 1994. Custom duty rates to be adjusted up and down to make up for differences in rate between consumption tax and general sales tax which will replace it. The purpose is to preserve stability of prices of goods in the market upon the introduction of the new law.

— Structural reform in the energy sector will be completed during the year. Power entities such as Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA), are expected to generate revenue sufficient to cover their long run marginal cost.

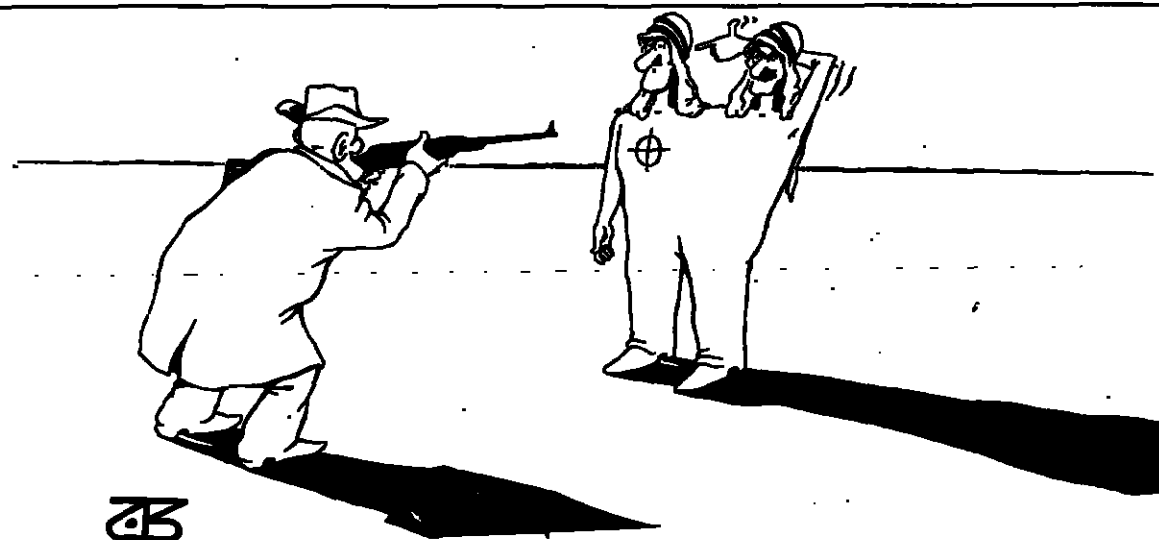
— Agricultural and irrigation water sectors reform plans will be defined by July 1994.

— Relations with the official creditors will be normalized through Paris Club.

These are the requirements of the adjustment programme, or its agenda for 1994. Aside from these points, all policies and measures which were taken or will be taken by the government are not directly related to the programme, but represent the government's best judgement on defining problems and making decisions on what should be done about them in the circumstances.

We succeeded not only in achieving the targets of the programme during 1992 and 1993 but in exceeding them as well. There is no reason to prevent Jordan from achieving similar results in 1994. The programme can succeed only if the government is fully committed and reforms were understood and supported by the people.

The long-term objectives justify the short-term sacrifices.



Israel's sinister trademarks out in the open

Israeli trainers have been sent all over Africa and Latin America to increase the efficiency of intractable brutal militaries

By Jane Hunter

MILITARY TRAINERS to shape up one of the factions in fragmenting Congo? Entirely legitimate, say Israeli officials — a routine transaction, this time coupled with a big arms sale. No problem. And, significantly, no shame. A Nigerian plane full of Israeli weapons grounded in Cyprus, and Uganda, the buyer on paper, denying everything? "It's kosher," Israel insists. In the normalisation it won the moment Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with Yasser Arafat on Sept. 13, Israel has brought one of its most sinister trademarks into the open.

The arms deal with Congo, which was the subject of controversy in Israel in February, was made through a government-regulated company. Israel used to lie with abandon about such companies, insisting that they were "private". It has always been obvious, though, that the multitude of Israeli "security" firms are virtual franchises, granted to ex-military officers so they can supplement their modest pensions. This time Israel blandly told the truth — or some of it, anyway. The load of arms which Uganda insists it did not buy has all the earmarks of a clandestine shipment to some non-governmental force. Despite Israel's new, blasé approach, the two deals raise questions about its vision of its own normality and its place in the international community.

The deal with Congo

The Israeli defence ministry responded in the traditional way when the mass circulation daily Yediot Aharonot reported the details of the arms and training deal with Congo late last January: "The ministry is not in the habit of addressing itself to publications concerning defence exports." But the very fact that the censor had not stopped publication of the details was a break with tradition. Never before had the Israeli public been told in advance of such activities.

The time, the public learned that 20 senior reserve officers had been recruited from elite military units and Shin Bet, the

domestic intelligence agency, to train Congolese units loyal to President Pascal Lissouba and hasten their use of \$50 million worth of Israeli arms. The arms came straight from Israel Military Industries and other Israeli weapons firms. Lavdan, one of dozens of government-licensed security export companies, was handling the sale and the trainers, according to the report. Lavdan is a subsidiary of Carden Investments, a public company. Its director is retired Brigadier-General Yisrael Ramot.

In another break with tradition, Prime Minister Rabin's spokesman said that companies like Lavdan must have government permission to work abroad. Oblique as it was, the acknowledgement stripped away the central political function of the "security" export companies — their deniability. For decades, the myth that these "cutouts" were autonomous enterprises allowed Israel to claim that it was not doing military deals — heaven forbid — with Iran, or South Africa, or Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega. It was always private businessmen beyond government control who created these scandals, Israel claimed.

In a further confirmation that such "cutout" sales are closely regulated, Mr. Rabin, who is also defence minister, delayed approving the Congo operation while he considered an appeal to halt it by two Meretz MKs. They had argued that Israel should not be involved in situations like the ethnic struggle in Congo. They also conveyed to Mr. Rabin the concerns of the mothers of a second batch of recruits. Rabin's spokesman told reporters about the subsequent authorisation of the sale.

The Meretz appeal was reported by Israeli state television, also miraculously unfettered by the censor. According to the report, 40 additional men, recent veterans of army undercover units, were being sent to Congo. Then the television did a telephone interview from Congo with Brig.-Gen. (ret) Ze'ev Zacharin, the leader of the Israeli team.

But all this was tame com-

pared to what television reported on Feb. 3: an offer by opponents of President Lissouba to pay Israeli military personnel \$15 million to bring off a coup. Faxed to a senior Israeli reserve officer from Montreal, the offer promised that Israeli investors willing to finance the coup would reap a rich reward in gold and diamond-mining rights and from the banks and foreign currency reserves once these had fallen to the opposition.

Congo has no foreign currency reserves. It was scratching to pay its civil servants even before a hopeful exercise in democracy launched in 1991 degenerated into armed combat between three ethnic factions for the honour of assum-

ing the national debt. That point was lost on Israeli television. And Israelis who fretted that their countrymen might find themselves in battle against each other also missed the point. What other country has such a surplus of employable rambos so routinely sought after? Men like Ze'ev Zacharin, with his experience training Israel's proxy army in Lebanon, can demand top dollar. The veterans under his command are reportedly earning \$2,500 a month plus expenses.

Israel has long had a reputation for this sort of thing. Israeli trainers have been sent all over Africa and Latin America, paid handsomely to increase the efficiency of in-

tractably brutal militaries and organise the palace guards of hated leaders.

Even more controversial have been Israel's deals with so-called "subnational" groups. In 1986, U.S.-based Israeli intelligence operatives organised an improbable trans-Atlantic attempt (the ultimately ill-fated Nobistor affair) to overthrow the government of Ghana on behalf of a dissident. He promised to reward success with valuable mining and gambling concessions.

Topping the list — indeed, way over the top — was the arming and training of the "narco-paramilitary" forces of the Colombian Medellin cocaine cartel during the late 1980s. Israel told sceptical

The 'Uganda' arms shipment

Reminiscent of the Antigua scandal was the unmarked Boeing 707 full of Israeli arms that made an emergency landing at Cyprus's Larnaca airport earlier this month. The plane was registered to a Nigerian company. Overnight Cargo, and the pilot said it had engine trouble. Israel, which has used Nigerian-registered companies for arms dealing in the past, insisted that the cargo was a legitimate arms sale to Uganda. "It had all the permits. It's kosher," a government spokesman said.

Uganda vehemently denies buying any arms from Israel and Reuters reports speculation that the arms had another African destination. It may well be that the Israelis were using a phony end-user certificate to slip arms through Uganda to the rebels in southern Sudan. Egypt's reported refusal to let the aircraft land noted that it was en route from Tel Aviv to Entebbe. The most serviceable explanation for why the plane was left in Cyprus for five days before being flown, cargo and all, back to Israel, is that some shameful operation had been thwarted by exposure. Israeli radio reported that a second plane, which tailed the 707 from Larnaca, would take the arms to Uganda. Perhaps.

How to justify a gory trade

These are the kind of operations which got the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) into big trouble in the 1970s. A U.S. public, sickened by revelations of CIA complicity in Chile and meddling in Cuba and Angola, gave Congress the impetus to rein in the agency. And President Jimmy Carter used a human rights yardstick to cut off military aid to some particularly brutal regimes.

Israeli trainers and arms dealers rushed in to the resultant vacuum in such countries as Guatemala and Chile, establishing the unique meter which was last month. When President Ronald Reagan revived the CIA's paramilitary tradition in the 1980s, he made Israel an indispensable partner in the

Here comes a forum for stability in Asia

By David C. Unger

NEW YORK — East Asia, from Seoul to Singapore, is now the world's axis for economic and trade growth. Any interruption of that region's growth would reverberate around the globe. Fortunately, most economic indicators point towards further expansion — provided there is continued political stability and peace.

With that in mind, East Asian nations are preparing to launch this July a promising vehicle for avoiding military conflicts. It is called the ASEAN Regional Forum, or ARF.

It is not a military alliance like NATO or a collective security organisation like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. But in time it could come to play a central role in U.S. strategy for the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the end of the Vietnam war, East Asia has been largely free of war and the destruction, diversion of resources and political turmoil that go with it. Peace has brought investor confidence, a stable and productive work force and rising levels of affluence. But any relapse into armed conflict could abruptly turn economic miracle into catastrophe.

The risk is limited but real. The cold war is over everywhere else, but the risk of ideologically based fighting still haunts the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. Elsewhere, territorial disputes remain dangerously unresolved, including claims by six nations to the potentially oil-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Meanwhile, mainland China is investing heavily in modernised military equipment that could be used to intervene beyond Chinese borders. Prominent Japanese politicians are talking openly about discarding the con-

straints that have bottled up Japanese military power since World War II. And many Asians worry that an inward-looking United States may be psychologically distancing itself from the region's security.

No one is more alert to the new dangers than the prosperous but vulnerable countries of developing Asia. The forum began as a project of the Association of South East Asian Nations — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei. Already it is more than a paper organisation.

ASEAN seminars have encouraged cooperative development of disputed areas in the Spratlys and promote exchanges of military information, along with joint training exercises to build confidence and damp down paranoia.

The forum is no longer limited to ASEAN. It includes, among others, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Vietnam and the United States. Conspicuously excluded, however, are some of the region's most dangerous potential flash points: Taiwan and North Korea. It is to live up to its ambition of preventing regional conflict, the forum must eventually embrace the entire region.

For decades, security in the Asia-Pacific region has been built around America's cold war treaties with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and others. Those treaties remain. But their governing assumption was that an enemy would always be international communism; it provided little guidance, reassurance in disputes with one U.S. ally against another. The ASEAN Regional Forum can. That gives Washington a strong incentive in encouraging its development.

New York Times

conflicts he launched against Angola, Libya, Nicaragua and the guerrillas in El Salvador. The killing carried out in proxy wars against the Soviet Union was unjustifiable. An opportunistic killing that Israel is blithely assisting now, and African states cobbles together across ethnic lines, departing colonial power struggle to come to terms with their imposed nationhood, even less justifiable. In the past, Israel claimed that its diplomatic and economic isolation caused its gratuitous contributions to Third World suffering. Now as Israel crows about its acceptance by its harshest African critics and sells itself as the economic dynamo of a post-peace Middle East, how will it justify its military export trade?

For the moment, while one is complaining about Israel's simply defend its gory trade as an employment policy for the men whose jobs suppressing the Palestinians may soon end. When human rights and development organisations get round to noticing Israel's outside contribution to global mayhem, Israel can argue that it is strengthening one contender to enforce peace.

Perhaps some pedant will complain that Israel's military sales are at odds with the current efforts of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to discourage military spending by indebted nations. Israeli officials can quickly explain that they are sustaining a faction that is committed to repaying the debts owed to those institutions. (Rationales for killing the victims of the world economic system are never in short supply, as they need only be convenient, not convincing.)

So Israel's candour about its military deals is not as refreshing as it seems. Indeed, it is an indication that Israel no longer fears the consequences when its dirty work is discovered. That candour is also a blatant piece of advertising. In the chaos to come, reads the Israeli message, our thugs will train your thugs to scramble to the top of the heap.

Middle East International

Doom and boom: Tale of two Hungarys

By Alex Bandy
The Associated Press

OZD, Hungary — This industrial town tucked away in eastern Hungary, near Slovakia and Ukraine, symbolises what everybody in Eastern Europe fears.

Under Communist rule, Ozd was a showcase. Its huge foundry, steel mill and mines symbolised the "country of iron and steel," every good Stalinist wanted to forge. Stagnant workers dotted the proletarian paradise, which produced 29 per cent of Hungary's iron ore and 34 per cent of its steel.

Now, the statues are rusting, only one of 30 mill chimneys is working and unemployment is 40 per cent. "Anybody who could leave left," said Istvan Buresik, head of the Labour Office, as 37 youngsters lined up for the nine jobs available that day in Ozd (pronounced Oh-zid).

Just 290 kilometres away, across the Danube in western Hungary, Sopron symbolises what everyone in Eastern Europe now wants.

Under Communism, Sopron was a closed city because the Austrian border was only a stone's throw away. Even Hungarians needed special permits to go there.

Sopron's mine shafts were flooded because the regime saw them as potential escape routes to Austria. Many resi-

dents left and the town slowly died.

Now, chic restaurants and bars vie for clientele. Austrians pour across the border to enjoy Sopron's picturesque 300-year-old central district or visit the 120 dentists, who charge one-tenth of Vienna prices. Ozd, population 47,000, has only eight dentists.

Last fall, a Sopron hotel owned by an Austro-Hungarian railroad company presented an "evening" with La Toya Jackson for an audience limited to 160 people at the equivalent of \$280 each.

"It's as if the country were cut in half at the Danube, that's how stark the differences are," said Vilmos Elek, deputy mayor of Ozd.

The contrasts extend to politics. In 1990 elections, western Hungary voted for more liberal parties than did the east. Western Hungary's image is the one the government in Budapest promotes both at home and to investors abroad.

Like the few other booming regions of the former Soviet bloc, western Hungary exudes dynamism. Sopron alone has 200 joint ventures, most of them with Austrian partners.

In nearby Szentgotthard, General Motors (GM) built a new assembly plant and gave the town that rusted of

east European commodities, a modern telephone system. Janos Kocsi, secretary of the Sopron Chamber of Commerce, even thinks of turning the Communist past into a capitalist gold mine. He is raising money to build a narrow-gauge rail line along the once-forbidding frontier as a tourist attraction.

"We have the former guard towers, barbed wire and search lights in storage," he said. "We'll put them back up to show people how fortified the border once was."

All Ozd could be a museum of Stalinism.

"I should have left (Hungary) under the Communists," said Istvan Kesze, 24, a former ironworker now on welfare. "I could have claimed refugee status. But I had a job then. Now, we have democracy and no work, and no one in the West wants us."

The town's single flirtation with foreign investment involved a German steel company that arrived in 1990 and left a year later, allegedly having exported everything of value from the old mills.

Although nearly all the mills are closed, the air remains foul. Some residents of Ozd go to Sopron for treatment of their respiratory diseases in its fresh Alpine air.

Slimy soot covers everything in Ozd, especially in the old foundry, which is being

dismantled brick-by-brick as people slip in a back entrance to find anything worth taking.

"It is just heartbreaking to see this place, which gave us our bread," said Imre Lakatos, 62, a pensioner who worked in the foundry for 40 years.

Almost the only thriving businesses in eastern Hungary are "bulejeto," cheap bars with no stools whose name means "To forget sorrow," Ozd has 235 of them.

The only other entertainment in town is a fading theatre that holds rummage sales and bingo games, and the Rio disco, open weekends only. The Rio, advertised as "Europe at Ozd prices," charges admission equivalent to \$1.

Most residents shop at "Little Comecon," a street black market tolerated by police.

Dealers from Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Romania sell tools, phony icons, rubber boots, liquor, cigarettes, vacuum cleaners, cheap cosmetics, fur caps and spare parts for old models of eastern European cars.

Sopron does not need such a market.

On the train leaving Ozd, young men exchanged tales of their bar brawls. On the train out of Sopron, youths talked of skiing weekends in Austria.

By Linda Sieg
Reuter

TOKYO — Japan's latest political turmoil is giving Michio Watanabe, one of the nation's most outspoken and colourful politicians, another crack at fulfilling his dream to become prime minister.

"If asked, I must say that I do have the will, the intent and the physical ability," the 70-year-old former foreign minister said this week as the ruling coalition was deadlocked on choosing a successor to outgoing prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

Mr. Watanabe, a pillar of the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was reported to be angry that the party would not support him as its official candidate. NHK Television said on Friday he had decided to break away from the party to achieve his lifelong ambition.

NHK said it was unclear whether Watanabe, who leads a powerful faction within the LDP, would ally himself with one of the warring groups in the eight-group ruling coalition.

The move, if confirmed, would be the third time the earthy, straight-talking Mr. Watanabe has thrown his hat in the ring for the premiership.

Last July, he ran for the LDP leadership after the once-dominant party lost its Lower House majority. Only to lose to the younger Yohei Kono. It was a hollow victory — Mr. Kono suffered the ignominy of becoming the first LDP president in 38 years not to be elected prime minister.

Back in 1991 Mr. Watanabe, head of a large faction within the LDP, had lost a first bid for the premiership when party powerbrokers opted for the older, more suave Kiichi Miyazawa.

Mr. Watanabe is a man of formidable experience in public life, having held the portfolios of health, agriculture, finance, trade and industry and foreign affairs. His background makes him a favourite with many in Japan's financial markets.

His salty wit, often expressed in the dialect of his native province, has made him popular with many voters.

But ill-health, a lack of credentials as a reformer, and a scandal-tainted career leave big question marks over the impact of a possible Watanabe premiership.

"In terms of style, he is definitely a throwback and if he has an agenda, it's not reformist," said Jeff Young, who analyses Japanese politics at Salomon Brothers



FULFILLING A DREAM: Michio Watanabe could have another crack at realising his ambition to be prime minister (AFP photo)

Against all odds, Watanabe tilts again at top job

Asia.

Political reform was the glue which held together Mr. Hosokawa's fragile multi-party coalition of diverse elements including the Shinseitō (Renewal Party) co-founded by LDP rebel Ichiro Ozawa, the Buddhist-based, centrist Komeitō (Clean Government Party) and the Socialists, deeply divided between hard left and moderate members.

But with political reform passed and Mr. Hosokawa set to step down amidst controversy over his personal finances, the coalition is now flirting with collapse.

Its polarisation into a mainstream camp led by the Shinseitō and an opposing Socialist-led faction has opened the door to a deal which could put Mr. Watanabe in the prime minister's post.

Mr. Watanabe has been approached by Ozawa's

group to join it in creating a new alliance.

Mr. Watanabe's poor health still casts doubt over whether he could handle the gruelling job as prime minister. He underwent gall bladder surgery in 1992 and was widely believed to have cancer.

In April 1993, pale and gaunt, he resigned as foreign minister and deputy premier. Most commentators thought his active political career was over.

Yet today he has regained weight and apparently vigour. He has been reported as saying he cured himself with large doses of vegetable broth.

Born in Tochigi Prefecture north of Tokyo, Mr. Watanabe set up as a tax accountant there after graduating from university. He entered politics by winning a seat in the Prefectural assembly.

Elected to the Diet (Parliament) in 1963, Mr. Watanabe was groomed for the top job over a long period with a string of senior party and government posts.

In 1989, when he was temporarily between ministries, his career veered off the rails over the recruit scandal, a share-for-favours scam which tainted half the cabinet.

Mr. Watanabe's 1991 appointment as foreign minister surprised many since he had become known abroad for his racial gaffes, dismissing Chinese as cave-dwellers and alleging that American blacks "polluted" white neighbourhoods.

But he proved an able, energetic diplomat, helping to push through controversial legislation to enable Japan to commit troops to United Nations-led peacekeeping operations.

Angola's diamond area is bandit country

By Nicholas Shaxson
Reuter

LUCAPA, Angola — Gunshots echo across the countryside night and day in Angola's diamond region as illegal miners, police and soldiers alike dig for the riches of the war-plagued country.

The Lucapa Mining Company (SML) churns out thousands of gem diamonds every week from its large industrial mines but within their concession area freelance diggers known as garimpeiros swarm across the hillsides in search of the tiny stones.

"They dig holes everywhere," a foreign worker in this northeastern Angola diamond town said. "The police dig. The soldiers dig. They dig inside the SML concession area. They don't have so many fights with mine security because a lot of them

are at it, too."

He said civilian helicopters landed in the bush regularly filled with people from Zaïre, Lebanon and South Africa seeking to buy the glimmering gems.

SML's director in Lucapa, Kiamé Matadidi, said the area was dangerous and the company had lost a lot of equipment to armed men.

"The activity here is very violent, very violent indeed. It is wild prospecting," he said.

Lucapa is one of the few diamond towns held by Angolan government forces. Beyond 30 km from town, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels and bandits make it dangerous to travel.

Army convoys travelling south to the provincial capital of Sauro are regularly attacked with rockets and machineguns.

"The convoys on that road are always carrying something interesting," a foreign worker said. "Sometimes UNITA attacks them, sometimes it's just bandits, sometimes it's people from the army itself."

A recent victim was Manuel Joaquim, who was recovering from deep machete wounds in the town hospital after being attacked by armed men while looking for Manioc in a field a week earlier.

"I don't know who they were or what they wanted," he said about his attackers. "Mine security, with four foreign employees and around 200 Angolans, has recently prevented attacks on the major sites."

Juliao Pedrosa, a Portuguese mine manager, said the processing plant operated only during daylight because of attacks.

Angola's main diamond-mining area, centred on the town of Cafunfo in the Cuanjo Valley 300 km west of Lucapa, fell into the hands of UNITA after civil war resumed in late 1992.

UNITA has been using the diamonds to fund its war against the former Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) which it has been fighting for nearly 18 years.

The area produced up to 200 million worth of diamonds last year, industry sources say.

Alberto Mendes, a 23-year-old garimpeiro, said it was a dangerous job, partly because police and soldiers sometimes stole the freelancers' stones.

A foreign miner said the visitors arriving in helicopters paid more for the stones than SML could.

Jordan recognises none but PLO

(Continued from page 1)

ating here illegally before Rabin made his statements to the press Thursday evening," the official told the Jordan Times.

The King said that the movement had "no legal status" here and that representatives here being Jordanian citizens "can choose to behave according to the law, constitution and declared political line of the Kingdom and will remain welcome." "Otherwise they have to answer for it," the King warned.

"We will not accept that this territory be turned into fighting grounds for the sons of Palestine or Jordan," he added stressing that he will do the impossible to maintain national unity "until such a time when the opportunity arises for people to make their choices."

"We will not allow any violation here or there which will put us in a position incompatible with our choice of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," he added.

The Palestinians "can discuss their affairs on their own. They can agree or disagree. This does not concern us," he added.

"We do not want to burden this country with more than it already has to carry unjustly even though this kind of situation is not strange to us."

But despite the strong warning the King was directing at the Islamic group, he said that the warning by Israel to Jordan was another link in the pressures placed on Jordan, including the naval blockade on the port of Aqaba, for what he described as "ambiguous" objectives.

"What is required of Jordan is until this time an ambiguous thing," the King said. "The naval blockade placed on Aqaba can only be seen as an attempt to tarnish Jordan's credibility."

"Otherwise why this concentration on Jordan when it is not the only state neighbouring Iraq and especially that we did abide by all the Security Council resolutions?" the King asked.

"The objective is to damage the image of Jordan and affect its credibility which we consider humiliating and unacceptable," the King said.

"The latest accusation that Jordan deals with terrorism falls within this same objective," the King said, adding that he did not think that people can say that any country has "resisted terrorism and worked against it in the way Jordan has done."

"We abhor and condemn violence wherever it occurs. This is the history of Jordan which has suffered as a result of violence and which has stood time and again squarely in the face of violence as it affected innocent people anywhere in the world... this has not changed or wavered," the King stressed.

"Can democracy in this country be the target because it does create discomfort to some?" the King further questioned adding that "we believe in democracy in this country and making Jordan a model in this world."

"Do these policies (of pressuring Jordan) aim to make Jordan kneel under pressure?" the King asked adding "our heads will remain high and will only bend to God alone."

"We would like to know what is this policy and what is its objectives... we also want to know who is behind this," the King said.

"Is it the Security Council, is one single nation or is it the coalition of countries of the Gulf war," the King said, adding that the series of pressures on the Kingdom have been "deeply humiliating."

The King said that his move to link the resumption of Jordan's role in the Middle East peace process to the lifting of the naval blockade on Aqaba aimed at receiving "assurances that we are close to resolving this issue" as well as push towards the "resolution of all our outstanding problems on the Jordanian-Israeli agenda leading to the desired peace."

He said that he felt that "there was a deliberate policy"

to target Jordan from all the countries neighbouring Iraq for embarrassment and pressure. "We feel that it could only mean that it is to tarnish the credibility of Jordan," the King concluded.

The King said that the recent wave of violence in the occupied territories and Israel "is most disturbing and distressing" but stressed that "the zenith of violence was the tragedy that occurred in Hebron a Friday morning and in a mosque... beyond that there has been actions and reactions." "Our hearts ache for the victims (of violence) and their families wherever they are," the King said.

He said that this chain of violence and counter violence has been partially caused by the "psychological setback" caused by the delay and waste of time in achieving progress in the Middle East peace process.

"We realised from the outset that it was going to take time and effort and patience," the King said, adding that "even by my standards, a lot of time has passed and has been wasted and the approach to peace has not been characterised by the required determination by all parties to the conflict."

"I think the government of Israel should have the courage to admit that it has and it bears the greater responsibility regarding the time wasted and the violence that has been growing in the occupied territories and in the region."

"As far as I am concerned it is time for all to assess and to move deliberately and seriously to achieve the desired results so that no more time is wasted," he added.

"I feel very strongly that the unfortunate target of the Hebron massacre or any other act that followed is the peace process," the King pointed out adding that "if this was the case then something has to be done about it."

Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim welcomed the King's reaffirmation that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in Jordan and elsewhere.

Cabinet rejects threats, restates stand

(Continued from page 1)

warned against Israel's hesitation in the peace process and its attempts to avoid substantial issues and continued creation of excuses and denial of Arab rights.

"Needless to say, Jordan is not in need of defending itself or its record that attests to its disapproval of acts of violence and terrorism. Jordan is not in need of any reminder of the consequences of terrorism which result in killing of innocent civilians and obstructing the peace process."

"Jordan has suffered a great deal as a result of terrorist acts and paid a high price in its citizens' blood and resources."

"Jordan would never allow, under any circumstances, a situation where its territories could be used as a springboard or a passage way for acts of violence or plotting for terrorism."

"This reflects the Kingdom's principled stand and keenness to protect the innocent and

safeguard human rights as well as the climate of democracy and the peace process."

"The Jordanian government has taken note of the Israeli prime minister's statement alleging that Jordan Television had broadcast an interview with a Hamas spokesman. This has never happened neither in the wake of the Afula nor the Hadera incidents. It is the Israeli television which had broadcast such interviews in its news bulletins."

"The Jordanian government, while reiterating its keenness on and commitment to the peace process and its quest for the success of intensive efforts for peace, rejects the method of threat or the implied threat in whole and in part."

"Jordan, acting from a position of an advocate of peace and acting towards achieving peace and stability in the region, will never succumb to any forms of pressure, threat or intimidation and calls for all efforts and supports all initiatives to speed up the peace process to resolve substantial issues with a view to ending the vicious cycle of violence and achieving peace, security, and stability for all peoples in the region."

Jordan, which is always committed to the unanimous Arab resolutions and respects them and out of its respect for the will of the Palestinian people in its free choice of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as its sole and legitimate representative, stresses that it will continue to deal with the PLO in its capacity as the sole party authorised to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians and to assume its responsibilities in Palestinian lands. Jordan will continue to deal with the PLO accordingly.

"Jordan will never allow Jordanian territory to serve as a platform for any group that acts otherwise or tries to weaken the PLO which aims at attaining the aspirations of the Palestinian people on their national soil."

U.S. flights remain frozen in Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

investigation at the site on Saturday.

Thursday's incident coincided with an ongoing Turkish land and air operation against Turkish Kurdish guerrilla hideouts in northern Iraq.

Forty-seven Kurdish guerrillas have been killed in the cross-border operation south of the Turkish town of Cukure since Tuesday, the regional governor's office said Saturday.

Turkey's Kurdish rebels have been fighting for autonomy and use northern Iraq as a staging point for hit-and-run attacks inside Turkey.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said Friday the policy of protecting Iraq's Kurds "is sound and should continue."

The United Nations exclusion zone in northern Iraq, he said, performs "a valuable function" and the multilateral mission "has been... very successful and very important."

Despite the loss of 26 lives in the destruction of two U.S.

helicopters, the president said, the multilateral effort to permit the semblance of normal life to Iraq's Kurdish population will not be affected.

Asked if the mission in northern Iraq should continue, Mr. Clinton told reporters, "I think so. I very definitely think so."

U.S. officials said the fighters misidentified the helicopters as Iraqi Hinds even though pilots had been told U.S. helicopters would be in the area.

The helicopters went down near the Kurdish village of Tozka, 30 kilometres east of Aqrah. The area is about 40 kilometres south of the Turkish border and 80 kilometres north of the 36th Parallel, the southern limit of the "no-fly" zone.

The mystery of how such a blunder could have happened deepened when Pentagon officials disclosed that the two helicopters were operating electronic signal equipment that should have identified

them immediately.

There had been some speculation that the helicopters might not have been running their IFF — identification, friend or foe — equipment, leaving the attacking pilots to rely more heavily on visual identification at very high speeds.

The incident has badly shaken U.S. confidence in military safety procedures and rekindled public debate over American involvement in international peacekeeping operations.

In the United Kingdom, the incident recalled a "friendly fire" accident in the Gulf war when nine British soldiers were killed by U.S. planes.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry pledged to take action to ensure there would be no repeat of the incident. He said similar U.S. operations in southern Iraq and Bosnia were also under way and operational practices would be reviewed.

Jordan to leave panel

(Continued from page 1)

The pact, signed by Mr. Saleh and Mr. Beidh, leaders of North and South Yemen respectively before the two countries merged in 1990, failed to end their feud which has paralysed the government since August.

Jordanian, Omani and Yemeni officers along with U.S. and French military attaches in Yemen are members of the committee that succeeded this week in holding the first meeting in months between Defence Minister Haitham Qassem Taher, a southerner, and the northern chief of staff, Brigadier Abdul Malek Al Sayani.

King Hussein said Jordan and Oman had worked jointly and succeeded in "halting the clashes (that erupted after the pact was signed), in returning some of the army units to their bases and in cooling matters

down."

However, he said Jordan would help Yemen reorganise its two armies — that did not merge after the unity — if Yemen requested.

Sharif Zeid's trip comes after King Hussein met Salem Saleh Mohammed, assistant secretary-general of Mr. Beidh's Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), in Amman on Tuesday.

In Sanaa, Yemen's Oil Ministry denied on Saturday local press reports that 13 foreign oil companies working in the country were pulling out.

A ministry source, quoted by the official SABA news agency, said the ministry "has not been notified by any of the companies of such intentions" and that the firms were "carrying out... operations as usual."

Local press reports had said that 13 companies working in Yemen have either pulled out or were planning to do so.

Berri stresses solidarity

(Continued from page 1)

have paid a price for our national stands."

Pointing to the similar circumstances and challenges facing Jordan and Lebanon, Mr. Masri stressed Jordan's commitment to the democratic process which he said distinguished Jordan from other countries in the region.

Similar pledges were made by Mr. Berri, who added that "attempts were made to fragment Lebanon because it offered a model in democracy and coexistence among followers of various sects."

Attributing the weak role Arab parliaments play in Arab politics in the absence of democracy, Mr. Berri said that "Lebanon fought more than others because it had more democracy than others."

The leader of the pro-Syrian Amal militia praised His Majesty King Hussein's commitment to democracy saying that among the "big achievements of King Hussein is that he moved towards and established democracy even though

he rules as a monarch while others started their rule with parties but ended up governing as individuals."

Mr. Berri emphasised the Lebanese people's commitment to national unity as the "best means of fighting the (Israeli) enemy."

The Lebanese leader agreed with Jordanian deputies on the need to develop economic ties among Arab countries and that sufficient cooperation and solidarity have to be proceeded by democratisation.

Mr. Berri, who will leave Jordan Wednesday, is scheduled to meet King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to discuss Jordanian-Lebanese relations and developments in the peace process. He said he was "looking forward to meeting King Hussein to benefit from the most patient Arab leader."

Official sources told the Jordan Times that Mr. Berri's visit to the Kingdom has "important political dimensions" and that he is received in Jordan not just as the speaker of Parliament but also as a prominent Lebanese and Arab leader.

Ministers sign biggest ever trade accord

MARRAKESH, Morocco (AP) — In a chandelied ceremonial chamber fringed with ornamental palm trees, 109 governments Friday signed the world's biggest ever trade accord to smash barriers to exports and boost global prosperity.

"Ministers salute the historic achievement... which they believe will strengthen the world economy and lead to more trade, investment, employment and income growth," said the final declaration closing the Uruguay Round of trade talks.

However, an accompanying statement set out a shopping list of future problems that need to be tackled, including workers' rights, paving the way for arguments in the coming months.

Thunderous applause erupted as Uruguay's Foreign Minister Sergio Abreu Bonilla banged the gavel to signify approval of the Uruguay Round accord after more than seven years of bitter negotiations.

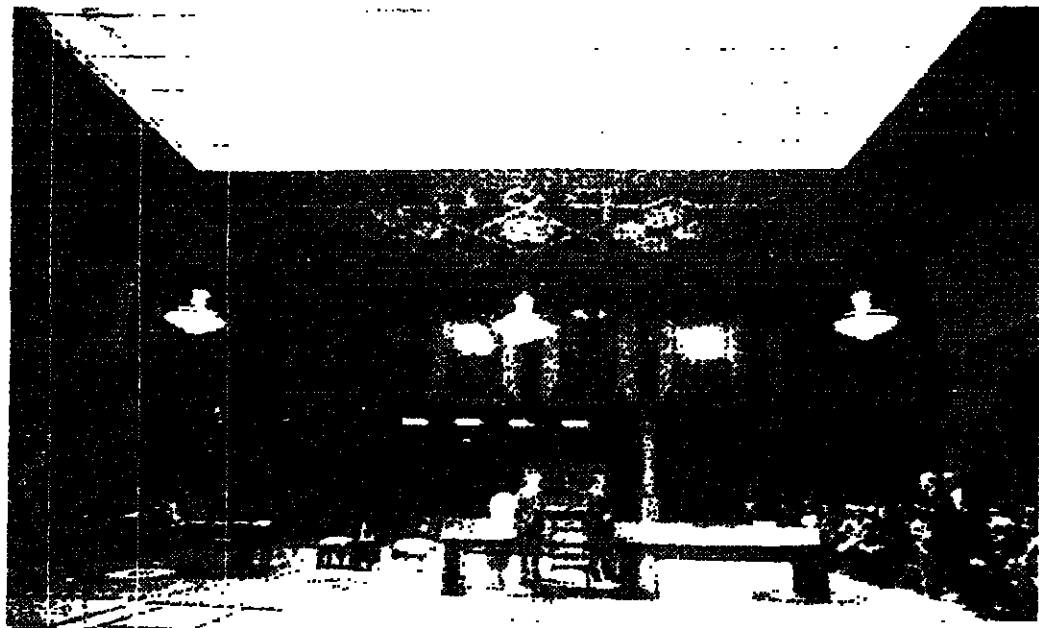
The celebrations climaxed with an evening gala in Moroccan King Hassan II's luxurious palace in this lush oasis city.

The package is expected to increase global income by more than \$200 billion in just ten years. It will cut barriers to trade in everything from computer chips to potato chips, phase out agricultural subsidies which inflate tax bills, and open up services like tourism and transportation to foreign companies.

The Uruguay Round has 124 participating countries, but some small nations did not attend the signing ceremony in Marrakesh.

Ministers from 97 countries signed an accompanying document committing them to membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which is meant to start life next Jan. 1.

The United States and Japan were among the nations which said they would not sign the separate WTO agreement until after their national legislatures had ratified the entire package. U.S. Vice President Al Gore



General view of the ornate Salle Royale of the Marrakesh Palais des Congres where ministers from more than 100 countries Friday signed the final act of the Uruguay Round of trade liberalisation talks. Below, general director of the GATT, Peter Sutherland, shows one of the numerous documents on the final act of the Uruguay Round (AFP photo)



and Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata, in speeches to the conference Thursday, both stressed they would aim for ratification before the end of this year.

If Congress is unable — or unwilling — to ratify the package promptly, this will delay implementation of the interna-

tional accords.

The final documentation spread out on the table during the signing ceremony totalled more than 26,000 pages — including a mind-boggling list of hundreds of thousands of new, lower customs duties. The Uruguay Round agreement, named after the country

in which it was launched in 1986, was clinched last December. It was three years late because of a row between the United States and Europe over farm reform.

The head of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Peter Sutherland, a former Irish attorney

general who steered through the accords, was jubilant.

"I'm tempted to answer that by doing an Irish jig on the table," Mr. Sutherland said when asked how he felt.

But both he and the Uruguayan chairman, Mr. Abreu, stressed the future challenges. Mr. Abreu read to delegates a list of issues that governments want to put on the agenda of the new WTO, the new, improved version of GATT which is meant to start life next Jan. 1.

These include the relationship between the trading system and internationally recognised labour standards; immigration policies, competition policy; political stability and the alleviation of poverty, and unilateral measures like U.S. trade legislation which imposes trade sanctions against unfair traders.

The long list means that the preparatory committee meant to draw up the mandate of the WTO will become bogged down as governments try to push their pet project.

The floodgates were opened by the United States and France, which insisted that workers' rights be firmly on the WTO agenda. Developing countries, which fear that labour standards may be used as a guise to keep out cheap labour imports, then put forward their own topics.

"The trade agenda will never be concluded," said GATT's Sutherland. "Whenever one issue is resolved, other issues will remain on the table and will need to be expanded."

The four-day conference in this North African oasis was accompanied by head-to-head bilateral bargaining by the world's largest trading powers on the sidelines.

In the most eagerly anticipated meeting of the week, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata Friday tried to cool their dispute over Japan's \$60 billion annual trade surplus.

But they did not make enough progress to announce a resumption in formal negotiations, broken off in February.

German banks come under fire for reckless lending

FRANKFURT (R) — Germany's highly profitable banks came under harsh attack Friday for lending vast sums to major customers — seemingly regardless of the risks — and so setting the stage for spectacular bankruptcies.

Germany's corporate landscape was this week rocked by its second major financial scandal of 1994 when property magnate Juergen Schneider disappeared without trace. His company, unable to make payments, filed for bankruptcy Friday.

The demise of the Schneider empire came hot on the heels of the dramatic bank rescue of Germany's 14th largest company, Metallgesellschaft A.G., which almost went bankrupt after losing 2.3 billion marks (\$1.34 billion) on risky U.S. oil deals.

The latest corporate collapse reopened with new vengeance a heated debate about the role of Germany's powerful banks in policing German industry. Banks were again accused of not showing enough care in lending funds. Worries also reemerged about the efficiency of the country's corporate supervisory system under which

bank directors sit on the boards of numerous companies.

As the extent of Schneider's problems became clear, politicians lashed out at Germany's powerful banks for making it too easy for major customers to borrow. Small customers or the taxpayer then bore the cost of their mistakes.

Klaus Bregger, head of the small- and medium-sized business association which is linked to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union Party, said banks were "criminally neglecting their supervisory duties and are foolishly giving undeserved preferential treatment to major customers."

"The scandal with respect to the Schneider Group cannot be explained in any other way," Mr. Bregger said.

"It is all the worse that these billions of marks of losses, which the banks helped to create, must be paid for by small bank customers with their bank fees and overdraft interest and by taxpayers via depreciation," he added. Ingrid Mathaeus-Maier, financial affairs spokeswoman

of the opposition Social Democratic Party, said the banks could not shirk responsibility for the Schneider case.

"They are clearly politically and morally responsible," she told German television on Thursday evening.

Mr. Bregger said the attitude of the banks toward their major customers was in stark contrast to the way they treated smaller clients, who often had to fight hard for any loans at all.

Chancellor Kohl, who this week appealed for banks to bail out the Schneider Group to preserve jobs and save businesses owed money by the group, has long called on banks to be less conservative in offering funds for projects in east Germany.

Banks seized on such calls for less caution to defend their lending policies.

"One day everyone says we are giving too little credit, particularly in east Germany, the next everyone reproaches us for being careless. These two cannot both be correct," said Bernd Springer, spokesman for the German Banking Association.

Foreigners take a bite at Russia's 'Boris' bonds

MOSCOW (R) — Who could resist the temptation of a Russian investment that is nicknamed "Boris" and offers fat yields of nearly 30 per cent a year in dollar terms?

Not hungry financiers, Western bankers in Moscow say. A stream of foreign banks, financial boutiques, junk-bond funds and emerging market traders have been lured to the Vneshekonbank bonds issued last year by the Russian finance ministry.

The paper, nicknamed after President Boris Yeltsin by some bankers and Taiga bonds after a frozen Siberian forest by others, has attracted more than \$200 million in foreign investment so far this year, Western bankers said Friday.

sented in Moscow for coupon payments.

Despite this, prices on the longest 15-year instalment — worth over \$2 billion and the most sought-after — have more than doubled since last December.

Bankers said an expected deal between Russia and the International Monetary Fund on a \$1.5 billion loan and progress on the country's \$80 billion debt would benefit the bond market but added that the presence of more Western investors will ultimately do

more to boost confidence.

As much as \$500 million has landed in Russia's emerging debt and equity markets so far this year, some Western bankers say, with others putting the figure as high as \$1 billion, mainly in backdoor investments in privatised companies by foreign funds seeking bargains and fearing they may be left out in the cold.

Foreign buyers of the "Boris" bonds include U.S. investment funds backed by the U.S. government and New York merchant banks.

U.S. industry busiest in years during March

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. factories were operating at their busiest pace in nearly five years during March, the Federal Reserve (Fed) said Friday, as manufacturing output grew for a 10th straight month.

Total industrial output increased by 0.5 per cent last month as factories, mines and utilities operated at 83.6 per cent of their maximum capacity.

That was up from 83.4 per cent in February and was the highest rate since June 1989, when business was running at 83.9 per cent of capacity.

The report from the Federal

Reserve Board — which functions as the U.S. central bank — fanned fears in financial markets that the Fed might hasten its timing for pushing interest rates up to dampen potential wage and price inflation.

The Fed has raised short-term rates twice this year — on Feb. 4 and March 22 — and it is widely expected to boost rates again to curb borrowing.

The Clinton administration, growing more concerned about rising interest rates in a congressional election year, said there was no immediate need for such action by the Fed.

"We still don't believe there's any inflationary pressure in the economy," White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers told reporters. "We still continue to predict moderate growth, sustained moderate growth without inflation."

As industrial operating rates grow, the risk increases of production bottlenecks that can foster big price rises and increased wage demands. But private economists and one Fed policymaker cautioned against assuming that point has been reached.

Typically, economists say that when industry hits 85 per

cent of capacity there is a risk of overheating in the economy that can trigger sharp price and wage rises.

But Susan Phillips, a Fed governor, said in New York after the industrial output figures were published that strong productivity growth and slack among other nations' manufacturing companies would check inflation.

"There is a positive environment for keeping inflation controlled," Ms. Phillips said. Recent inflation data looks good, aside from some pressure on commodities like copper and lumber, she said.

One of the industries that has steamed forward fastest since industrial output began its unbroken string of gains in mid-1993 was automaking, but it slowed somewhat in March.

"The output in several industries picked up notably from the weather-related slowdowns of January and February, but the overall increase was held back by a drop in production of motor vehicles and electricity," the Fed said.

New-car assembly rates eased in March to an annual rate of 7.2 million from 7.6 million in February and light trucks were down to 5.4 million from six million.

Utilities' production rates

for electricity and gas fell by 1.8 per cent in March as the weather grew milder following a 1.2 per cent February decline.

Economist Dick Berner of Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh said automakers were simply "taking a breather" as they start to retool for new models. Sales are still strong for new cars.

Mr. Berner said he expects the next round of interest-rate rises to come after the May 17 meeting of the policymaking Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC).

Rising capacity use "could prompt the Fed to rethink gradual tightening and move more vigorously," he said, though it likely would take more indications of inflation to prompt all the FOMC members to agree to do so.

Similarly, economist Allen Sinai of Lehman Bros in New York said the rising capacity use rate, "is a potential inflationary threat" but not an immediate one likely to force the Fed's hand.

The figure is tiny by world standards — but a respectable investment given a general suspicion over Russian risk which, according to some bankers, is the highest in the world after Iraq.

The dollar-denominated bonds, with maturities from one to 15 years, were placed in five tranches worth a total of \$8 billion — enough, bankers say, to create a sufficiently liquid debt market in Russia.

High returns bucking global downward trends and relatively low risk compared to other Russian securities have sent "Boris" bonds soaring and made the market hungry for more.

"A lot of people are looking for Russian instruments to buy and there are very few things on the market," Miljenko Horvat, president of Citicorp in Russia, told Reuters.

Choice and liquidity are limited and the market, run by telephone, is hampered by bureaucratic inefficiency. Bonds must be physically pre-

China postpones tax on stock gains

BEIJING (AP) — Profits from playing the stock market won't be taxed for at least two more years, Chinese officials said in an effort to give the country's flagging markets a boost.

Prices on China's two markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen have been in a slump this year. Some analysts blamed market authorities for adding new listings too quickly, outpacing demand. Others blamed the new tax law that took effect Jan. 1 and included trading gains in taxable income.

"The issue demands a whole set of principles and enforcement is rather complex," the official Xinhua News Agency quoted Li Yonggui, vice director of the State Administration of Taxation, as saying.

"We need time to conduct research on how and when to introduce this tax," he said, but promised that it will not be enforced this year or next.

However, he said the government plans a crackdown on personal income tax evaders in the second half of the year. By

law, Chinese, must pay tax on monthly income exceeding 800 Yuan (\$92), but few do.

Mr. Li said government offices are being asked this month to begin deducting tax payments from their employees' wages.

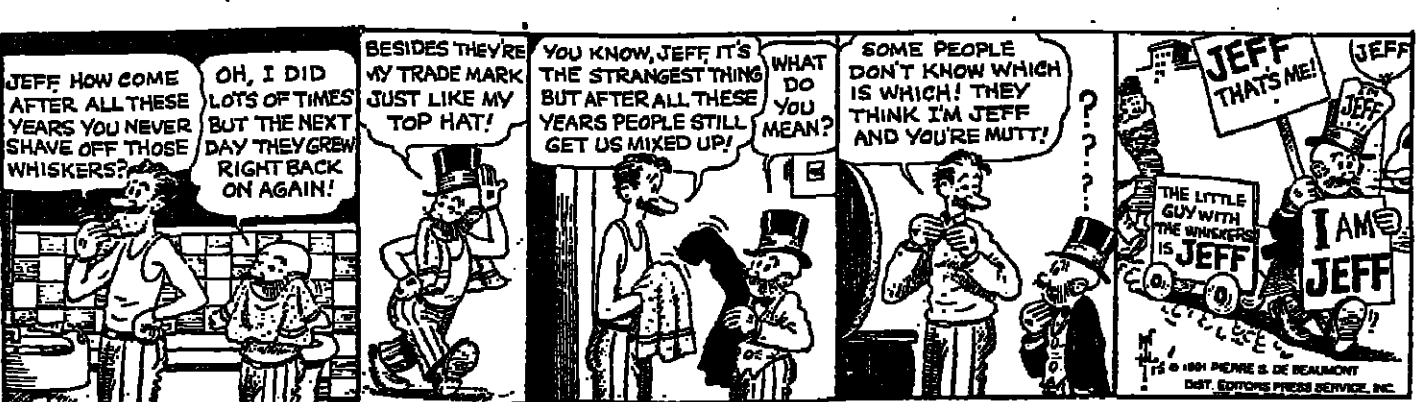
He said stricter enforcement has already increased the state's personal income tax revenue to 1.3 billion yuan (\$149 million) in the first quarter of the year, up 56 per cent from the same period of 1993.

Utilities' production rates

Peanuts



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY APRIL 17, 1994

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Because of the planetary influence of Moon square Mercury you will need to handle problem later in the day. The double Moon trine to Jupiter and Saturn in the AM, however, is quite a boost.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Attend services that can give you peace of mind and spirit. Then make confidential plans to gain your fondest aims. Be logical in any situation.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be more thoughtful of family members. Concentrate on how to be more productive in the future on any project. Be more cheerful to others.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A time to meditate on philosophical matters and gain a better perspective on life. Express happiness with loved ones you are appreciative of.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) A day to make sure you are living according to your true beliefs. Strive for increased harmony at home especially with loved ones.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Take time to study new ways of gaining added abundance in the days ahead. Discuss new arrangements with family members and get their opinion.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Figure out a better way to

achieve more success in the future. Be of greater assistance to others and gain their goodwill and support.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A good day to show appreciation to others for past favours. Stop wasting time with one who is detrimental to your progress in your chosen field.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Put aside usual pursuits of the day and study new interests that could help you become more successful. Be practical in your endeavours.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Cooperate more with family members and have increased happiness. Attend to personal duties that must be done for you to get ahead now.

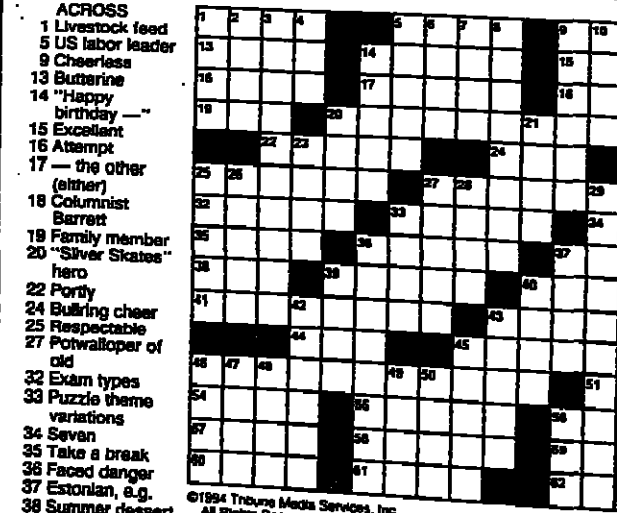
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Be sensible in handling important matters of communication. An intuitive prompting could be erroneous for you at this time.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 19) A fine day to plan how to operate more efficiently in the future. Strive for increased harmony at home. Express happiness to your loved ones.

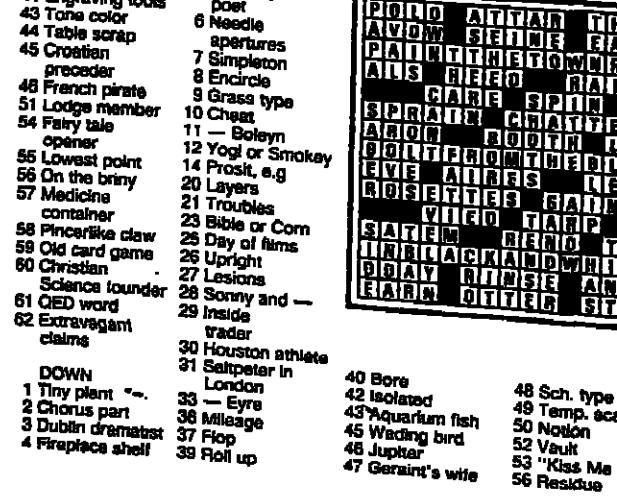
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get out of that rut you are in and engage in progressive activities that can make your life richer. Study philosophical matters.

THE Daily Crossword

by Matthew Higgins



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Brazil, banks sign major debt accord

NEW YORK (AP) — Brazil closed a major chapter in its debt-ridden history late Friday by completing an agreement with 750 banks that refinances roughly \$49 billion in borrowed money.

The accord, reached in New York, is a vestige of the enormous run-up in Third World debts that sent shock waves through the world financial system in the early 1980s, created a "lost decade" of stagnation in Latin America and led to big losses by banks in the United States and other developed countries.

Brazil today achieved an important milestone in its continuing programme of economic reform, said Rubens Ricuperio, Brazil's finance minister, in a press statement.

William Rhodes, vice chairman of Citibank and a key negotiator in the process that led to the agreement, called it "an historic day for Brazil in allowing it to normalise relations with its external creditors and giving further momentum to its programme of economic opening and reform."

Under a novel arrangement set up by former treasury secretary Nicholas Brady, Brazil will repay much of its remaining debt to the banks with special bonds, backed by U.S. Treasury bonds as collateral.

These special bonds, called Brady bonds, have been utilised by Mexico and Argentina to ease the pain of their onerous debts. Brady bonds are

considered partly responsible for the economic resurgence of those two countries.

Brazil, which has the highest foreign debt in the developing world, owes creditors about \$120 billion.

The magnitude of the debt and Brazil's inability to pay has complicated the country's effort to control rampant inflation, and is a key reason why Brazil lacks access to more foreign capital most banks have been reluctant to lend it more money.

Citibank, the biggest U.S. bank and the lead negotiator in the debt restructuring, is owed about \$2.5 billion.

The basic outline of the debt restructuring was reached last Nov. 29 but was delayed by a few recalcitrant creditors and Brazil's difficulties in completing an economic reform agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

The deal was further complicated by the recent upheaval in the bond market, which raised interest rates and depressed the prices of already-issued Brady bonds.

The Latin American debt crisis began in August 1982 when the government of Mexico proclaimed it was no longer able to pay the interest on its debt.

That declaration traumatised banks that had been freely lending billions of dollars to Latin America and were suddenly confronted with the prospect that they wouldn't be repaid.

Indeed, many big U.S. banks were forced to set aside big sums as a cushion against the risk of default as other Latin borrowers said they couldn't pay the interest on their debts.

Banks have been eager to finalise the pact with Brazil prior to the Oct. 3 presidential elections. There has been some fear that the leading candidate, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party, would seek to renegotiate it.

Former finance minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who lobbied hard for the new accord, resigned last month to run for president. He's second to Mr. Lula in the latest polls.

Cairo to spend much more next year

CAIRO (R) — The Egyptian government plans to increase spending next fiscal year by at least 13 per cent, well above the inflation rate, according to figures published in government newspapers Saturday.

Prime Minister Atef Sedki was quoted as saying that total spending in the budget for the year 1994/5 would be more than 80 billion pounds (\$23.7 billion) and that this was at least 10 billion pounds (3 billion) more than in the current budget.

Fiscal years in Egypt begin on July 1.

Finance Minister Mohammad El Razaz was quoted as saying the government would spend 83 billion pounds (\$24.6 billion) next year and that the deficit would be 4.3 per cent — the equivalent of 3.6 billion pounds (\$1.1 billion).

That deficit — less than 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product — would be within the target set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for this fiscal year.

The government newspapers gave few details and finance ministry officials were not available to comment.

Spending in the 1993/4 budget was originally set at 60 billion pounds (about \$18 billion) but it was not clear what the final figure would be.

The rate of inflation in Egypt fell to 7.3 per cent in February, the lowest since December 1990. Ministers say they expect it to keep falling.

The newspaper Al Ahran

quoted Mr. Razaz as saying "sovereignty revenues" — the largest element in the government's income — would rise 14 per cent, to 40.3 billion pounds (\$11.9 billion) from the 35.3 billion (\$10.4 billion) projected for this year.

Al Ahran quoted a finance ministry source as saying that although the government has cut tariff rates, it would earn more from customs because many companies had lost their exemptions.

Mr. Razaz said the government's wage bill would rise 19 per cent, to 13.8 billion pounds (\$4 billion) from 11.6 billion (\$3.4 billion) in this year's budget.

The government will send the budget to parliament towards the end of the month.

Meanwhile, Egypt will produce 56.2 million tonnes of oil, gas and condensate in the financial year 1994/5, a 2.3 per cent increase over 54.9 million tonnes in calendar 1993.

The government newspaper Al Ahran quoted Oil Minister Hamdi Al Banbi as saying the total for 1994/5 included 46 million tonnes of crude oil, nine million tonnes of natural gas and 1.2 million tonnes of condensate.

The equivalent figures for calendar 1993 were 45 million, 8.66 million and 1.278 million tonnes.

Projections for the six-month period January-June 1994 were not immediately available.

Lebanese banks cut prime lending rate to 20%

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's banks cut their prime lending rate to 20 per cent from 22 to strengthen the local currency and encourage borrowing in it.

The Lebanese Banks' Association said in a statement its board decided on the cut — the second in two months — to reduce the cost of borrowing the Lebanese lira and strengthen the currency.

At present, borrowing in Lebanon is in U.S. dollars because the banks' dollar lending rate is about 12 per cent. The economy is still heavily dollarised after panic purchases of the U.S. currency during and after the 1975-90 civil war.

Some 62 per cent of bank deposits are held in dollars but this is down from 90 per cent when Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri took over in October 1992.

Dollarisation has fallen from 75 per cent in the nine months since central bank governor Riadh Salameh took over on Aug. 1, 1993.

Mr. Salameh has made a strong lira a priority. Thanks to renewed confidence and capital inflows the currency has strengthened steadily under Mr. Hariri.

Friday's lending rate cut follows a reduction from 26 per cent to 22 per cent on Feb. 17 which signalled growing confidence that Lebanon's economic recovery is on course.

The February cut was the first major reduction in interest rates since October 1992.

The latest cuts are in line with a steady reduction in yields of pound-denominated treasury bills which are the benchmark for Lebanon's reemerging financial market.

Treasury bill yields have recently fallen just below 20 per cent.

Many depositors are switching to liras as confidence rises and the lira continues to strengthen against the dollar. They are selling dollars to invest in the high-yield treasury bills.

A sharp rise in the central bank's foreign currency reserves to \$2.6 billion at the end of March from \$1.9 billion at the end of 1993 gave authorities the leeway to cut interest rates by enabling it to defend the lira on the foreign exchange market.

The lira closed at 1,692.50 to the dollar Friday, continuing its recovery from its nadir of 2,750 in 1992.

The banks' association said it was setting the following maximum credit rates on Lebanese lira bank accounts:

- Savings accounts, seven per cent;
- Savings accounts for one and three months, 15 per cent;
- Savings accounts for six months and a year, 16 per cent.

Syria expects record 4.4m tonne wheat harvest

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria's Farmer's Union said Saturday it expected a record wheat harvest of 4.4 million tonnes this year compared to last year's record of 3.62 million tonnes.

Officials at the union attributed the expected increase to good rainfall which covered the north and northeastern areas where wheat is mainly planted.

Syria has achieved sharp increases in wheat production in recent years. Production has more than quadrupled since the 1.02 million tonne harvest in 1989.

The increase has posed a big storage problem. Most of the crop is kept in the open air without proper conditions.

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Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 16/4/1994

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7040	0.7060
Sterling Pound	1.0348	1.0400
Deutsche Mark	0.4101	0.4122
Swiss Franc	0.4537	0.4561
French Franc	0.1200	0.1206
Japanese Yen	0.6791	0.6825
Dutch Guilder	0.3653	0.3676
Swedish Krona	0.0429	0.0431
Italian Lira	0.0000	0.0000
Belgian Franc	0.0000	0.0000

Per 100

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	New York Close
Sterling Pound	1.4773	1.4720
Deutsche Mark	1.7100	1.7145
Swiss Franc	1.4470	1.4550
French Franc	5.5478	5.5615
Japanese Yen	104.27	103.45
European Currency Unit	1.1313**	1.1285

USD Per STD
European Opening at 8:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 16/4/1994

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	3.5000	3.7500	4.0600	4.7500
Sterling Pound	4.8100	4.9400	5.1300	5.4400
Deutsche Mark	5.5600	5.4400	5.3100	5.1300
Swiss Franc	3.9400	3.8800	3.8100	3.7500
French Franc	5.8800	5.8800	5.8100	5.7500
Japanese Yen	2.0000	2.0000	2.1300	2.3800
European Currency Unit	6.1800	6.1200	6.0000	5.9300

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Other Currencies Date: 16/4/1994

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8510	1.8640
Lebanese Lira	0.040575	0.041775
Saudi Riyal	0.1874	0.1886
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3200	2.3550
Qatari Riyal	0.1911	0.1920
Egyptian Pound	0.1900	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.5090	1.8250
UAE Dirham	0.1911	0.1920
Greek Drachma	0.26355	0.36675
Cypriot Pound	1.2655	1.3875

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Mandela makes flying campaign visit to tense Zulu heartland

LAMONTVILLE, South Africa (R) — ANC leader Nelson Mandela, almost certain to be South Africa's first black president, made a campaign visit to the volatile Zulu heartland of Natal Saturday amid fears of fresh election violence.

Hundreds of ecstatic supporters mobbed Mr. Mandela when he began a walkabout in this ANC stronghold in a region where 10,000 people have been killed in a decade of political rivalry pitting ANC supporters against those of the rival Inkatha Freedom Party.

Officials said Mandela, whose African National Congress is widely expected to win South Africa's historic April 26-28 all-race elections, would spend just one day in Natal. "We are keeping our fingers crossed that everything goes okay today. Security is very tight," said a senior ANC security official overseeing the visit.

Lamontville is one of a string of townships in Natal and the adjoining KwaZulu homeland, where most of South Africa's 8.5 million Zulus have their roots.

As security officials struggled to clear a path for the ANC leader, a group of cheering children watched from the top of a huge ANC billboard which proclaimed: "Vote for justice, peace and freedom."

Inkatha, a Zulu-based party led by black conservative Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Friday announced a series of protests against the elections, including marches through South Africa's commercial centre of Johannesburg.

Mr. Buthelezi, who is demanding virtual self-rule in KwaZulu-Natal, is boycotting the election.

Police banned the marches, saying they had to prevent a repeat of mayhem in the city on March 28 when 53 blacks were killed during Inkatha anti-poll protests.

The Johannesburg youth branch of Inkatha, which said up to 50,000 supporters would march through the city Monday and Tuesday, said it would defy the ban and every effort would be made to ensure the marches were peaceful.

It also said a wreath would be laid outside the ANC Headquarters in honour of the March 28 dead. Eight of the 53 dead were shot by ANC security guards, who accused Inkatha supporters of trying to storm their headquarters.

A final announcement on Inkatha's plans was expected over the weekend.

The ANC, which is widely expected to win the elections which will formally end three centuries of white supremacy,

said the proposed Inkatha protests threaten "a further outbreak of violence and bloodshed in the centre of Johannesburg."

In announcing the marches, Inkatha youth brigade leader Charles Loliwe accused President F.W. de Klerk and Mr. Mandela of sabotaging an attempt this week at foreign mediation to bring Mr. Buthelezi into the election process.

"The failure of mediation was the last straw," Mr. Loliwe said. "De Klerk and Mandela don't want us to participate in the elections. The elections can now never be free and fair."

Mr. Buthelezi, who demands virtual autonomy for the Natal-KwaZulu region where he has most support, had wanted the elections to be postponed to give him time to organise.

Seven frustrated international mediators left South Africa this week after a dispute among South Africa's main political players scuttled agreement on their terms of reference.

Mr. Buthelezi had wanted discussion of a delay in the poll, an idea rejected by the ANC and the government.

The government and the Transitional Executive Council, which is supervising South

Africa's march to democracy, clamped a state of emergency on KwaZulu-Natal on March 31 and have sent in 3,000 troops to enforce it. Since then, at least 218 people have died there in political violence.

Meanwhile, shootings in Natal province and a black township of Johannesburg killed three people early Saturday in political violence linked to South Africa's first all-race election.

An Associated Press photographer in a black settlement of the KwaZulu homeland in Natal early Saturday saw men fire shots from a passing car at houses in an ANC area.

When the car was unable to pass a makeshift brick barricade, the occupants fled. Within minutes, residents from the ANC area flipped and burned the vehicle, and a shootout about 200 metres away left one man dead and one injured. The identities of the victims were not known.

In the Alexandra township in Johannesburg, two men died in shooting that appeared to come from a workers dormitory dominated by the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party. One victim, blood streaming around him, was lying at the township post office just across the fence from the hostel.

Serbs tighten stranglehold on Gorazde

SARAJEVO (AP) — Bosnian Serbs were poised to overrun the Muslim enclave of Gorazde Saturday, and U.N. officials indicated they might consider air strikes to protect the U.N.-declared "safe area."

U.N. officials also said they hoped to negotiate a military exclusion zone around the embattled town, 55 kilometres (35 miles) southeast of Sarajevo.

The Serbs seized key positions around Gorazde in a day-long attack Friday.

Bosnian radio said Serbs continued to shell the town and were "on the very doorstep of the city from the south." But U.N. reports suggested the Serbs were not moving in.

"It seems that the Serbs are consolidating on the high ground around the city, not showing intention to go into the city itself," said a U.N. spokesman, Maj. Dacre Holloway.

Another spokesman, Maj. Rob Annink, said the Serbs are "on high ground and control the whole town from positions they hold now."

The Bosnian army promised to guarantee the "safety and protection" of Gorazde citizens who took refuge behind Serb lines, including government fighters who gave up their weapons, the Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, reported from Belgrade.

The U.N. civilian chief in former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, said Friday that new NATO air strikes were deemed unnecessary because a local truce had been arranged to allow two wounded British liaison officers to be evacuated.

U.N. officials in New York said the U.N. commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, had requested NATO air support. His request was rejected, but Mr. Akashi threatened the Serbs with strikes unless they agreed to the ceasefire.

Reading from what he said were notes from a Saturday morning U.N. military briefing, Maj. Annink quoted Mr. Akashi as saying that any "solution to this fight by means of air strikes" had to be addressed by NATO and the United Nations in New York. "The outcome can change our task dramatically," he said.

Mr. Akashi was to meet again Saturday with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic in Pale, the Serb headquarters just east of Sarajevo, to discuss a possible military exclusion zone in a 20-kilometre (12.4-mile) radius around Gorazde. There were no details.

Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin, who also is involved in the



A picture taken on the Clemenceau aircraft-carrier of the tail of the French Super-Éclair aircraft-bomber hit Friday afternoon during a reconnaissance flight over the Gorazde enclave of eastern Bosnia (AFP photo)

talks, said the situation "isn't going very well," but that he was encouraged by an apparent ceasefire at Gorazde.

"Now the main urgent effort is to firm it up, to stabilise the situation further in Gorazde," he said.

A plane carrying the U.N. commander for former Yugoslavia, Gen. Bertrand De Lapresle, took several hits as it was arriving at Sarajevo Airport Saturday morning, Maj. Holloway said.

There were no details, but Maj. Holloway said the airport was closed to all flights. Relief flights already had been suspended because of tensions after limited NATO air strikes against Serb forces near Gorazde last Sunday and Monday.

Sarajevo has been mostly quiet since Feb. 10, when a truce between besieging Serbs and the Muslim-led government took effect. But Muslim-Serb fighting has continued elsewhere.

Despite Mr. Akashi's statement that a local truce had been arranged late Friday to evacuate the wounded Britons from Gorazde, a U.N. helicopter carrying one of the injured officers was fired on as it left

the town. The officer later died in Sarajevo.

The other officer was treated in Gorazde and chose to stay, Maj. Holloway said.

Maj. Annink said the British officer who died was hit by small arms fire. The other officer was slightly injured by shrapnel. They apparently were caught up in an attack as Serbs took a hill overlooking Gorazde.

A Bosnian Serb spokesman, Jovan Zemetica, told the British Broadcasting Corp. that the two men "had no business right on the front line" where the attack occurred.

In another incident, anti-aircraft fire struck the tail of a French reconnaissance plane flying over Gorazde Friday afternoon, but the plane returned safely to the carrier Clemenceau in the Adriatic Sea, NATO said.

The Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) denied that Serb troops had shot at the plane and accused Muslim forces of firing at it to provoke a NATO attack.

U.N. spokesman Joe Sills in New York said the United Nations decided not to withdraw its 17 personnel from Gorazde.

Chinese soldiers reportedly killed Taiwan tourists

TAIPEI (R) — A Taiwanese government source quoting intelligence reports said Saturday a group of renegade Chinese soldiers murdered 24 Taiwanese tourists who died in a mysterious boat fire in China last month.

The sources told Reuters a number of People's Liberation Army soldiers armed with flamethrowers robbed and burned to death the tourists and eight Chinese crew of the boat on Qiandao Lake in the province of Zhejiang on March 31.

Chinese authorities found out about the murder the next day but decided to cover it up and ordered the loot to be far-reaching, the source quoted intelligence which he described as "authoritative" as saying.

The deaths of the tourists under mysterious circumstances have strained uneasy relations between Taiwan and China, bitter rivals since the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949.

Relatives of the victims have accused China of covering up what they allege was mass murder. They raised several questionable points, including why the victims did not jump ship and were instead huddled in the small cabin below.

The relatives said authorities restricted their movements while they were in China recovering the victims' remains. The authorities had also insisted the remains be cremated in China instead of being taken to Taiwan.

China acknowledged last week that the blaze might have been caused by "saboteurs". It pledged that the culprits would be severely punished after Taiwanese leaders called Chinese authorities "bandits...trampling on human lives."

In Beijing, officials from the State Council (cabinet) and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence could not be reached for comment on the latest allegations.

Taiwan will suspend all group tours to China from May 1 and has declared 11 scenic spots, including Qiandao Lake and Lhasa in Tibet, high-risk areas for travel.

About 10,000 Taiwanese have backed out of tours to China. About 450 group tours have been cancelled, costing travel agents about Taiwan dollars 300 million (\$11.4 million), according to the Taipei Association of Travel Agents.

Chinese officials estimate more than one million Taiwanese travellers last year pumped at least \$589 million into China's economy. Taiwan lifted a four-decade-old ban on travel to China in 1987.

China has urged Taiwan authorities to "handle the matter in a rational and cool-minded manner so as to avoid a setback in relations."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Near-collision reported over Estonia

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Two Jumbo Jets belonging to Air France and Finnair flew "dangerously close" to each other while flying over Estonia, a government official told a news agency Friday. Viktor Popov, head of air traffic operations for the Estonian Aviation Department, was quoted by the Baltic News Service as saying the planes were wrongly flying at the same altitude, 12,000 metres (39,000 feet). The report did not address how close the planes came to each other in the incident last Sunday. Mati Sormus, director-general of the Estonian Aviation Department, said it was not clear whether Estonian flight controllers or a plane crew was to blame. The Air France Boeing 747 was flying westward while the Finnair DC-10 was flying north to Helsinki, Finland, Mr. Popov told the news service. Estonian and Finnish investigators were looking into the incident, the report said. Finnair spokesman Usko Maatta denied Friday night that there had been a near-collision, saying the planes were never closer than 3.148 kilometres (1.95 miles) from each other. He said a "normal incident report" was compiled but that there was no special investigation.

Russia to hold talks with Chechnya

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin has ordered consultations on a possible power-sharing deal between Moscow and its breakaway province of Chechnya, the official ITAR-TASS news agency reported Saturday. It quoted Mr. Yeltsin's decree as saying that consultations were to be held with both authorities and public figures in the southern region, which had announced independence from Russia in 1991. A similar power-sharing deal, reached between Russia and Tartarstan, another independent-minded province, earlier this year provided for strong autonomy for the oil-rich region both economically and politically. TASS did not say when Mr. Yeltsin signed the decree or whether Chechen authorities agreed to take part in consultations. Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudaev faces growing opposition to his authoritarian rule in the mountainous republic.

New York police face corruption charges

NEW YORK (AP) — This time, the bad cops were so bad that the police commissioner wants to retire their badge numbers. One cop was caught on videotape stuffing money into his pants. Two others allegedly split \$100,000 they found in a bag during an apartment search. In all, a dozen officers from the 30th Precinct in Harlem are accused of federal and state crimes in the latest disclosures in the police department corruption scandal. The bad apples used their badges "not for protection but as weapons," Commissioner William Bratton said, "to punish, to brutalise, to steal, to rob and to cheat." Nine of the officers were arrested during overnight raids. Three others already had pleaded guilty. Mr. Bratton said Friday. Police also arrested eight civilians who allegedly were involved with officers in drug activities.

Japanese student shot in Denver

DENVER (R) — A 26-year-old Japanese college student was shot and seriously wounded outside his apartment Friday by two masked men who stole his car, police said. In the latest in a series of violent attacks against Japanese visitors to the United States, Koyichi Takamoto was shot in the chest in the parking lot of his apartment complex and was rushed to a local hospital to undergo emergency surgery. Mr. Takamoto's wound was not life-threatening and he was expected to survive, said C.L. Harmer, a spokeswoman for Denver General Hospital. The suspects, who abandoned his 1987 Toyota Supra sports car about 10 miles (16 km) from the scene, were being sought. The shooting took place only three weeks after two film students from Japan were fatally wounded in a similar "carjacking" outside a supermarket in the Los Angeles suburb of San Pedro.

Tornadoes leave 3 dead in U.S.

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn (R) — Tornadoes ripped through four states from Indiana to Tennessee Friday, killing two people and injuring several others. A separate storm system spawned a Texas tornado that killed a woman and injured 13 people. A 58-year-old man died and three people including a nine-month-old child were hurt by a tornado at midday in a rural area near Birchwood, Tennessee, 35 miles (47 km) north of Chattanooga. The infant was found face down in a field about 200 yards (metres) from the family's shattered home but survived with just a broken leg, officials with the Hamilton County Emergency Medical Agency in Chattanooga said. A woman initially reported dead was later listed in critical condition at hospital after being transported by air ambulance from the scene, where at least half a dozen mobile homes were destroyed and 20 houses damaged. The Tennessee man who died was found under debris, but authorities were unable to confirm reports that a house collapsed on top of him. In Kentucky, a 34-year-old Hardin County woman was killed when high winds tumbled her family's mobile home on top of her as she and her brother ran from the structure for safety near Elizabethtown.

Japan coalition nears policy accord

TOKYO (R) — After a week of bitter squabbling Japan's ruling coalition was reported close to agreement Saturday on a policy platform for a new government, most likely under Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata.

Coalition officials said representatives from seven parties — some small parties dropped out of talks Friday — had agreed on reform and New Japan's two issues that had threatened to break up the bloc over the past few months.

"We aim to finalise our policy agreement in our next meeting on Monday," said Wataru Kubo of the Socialists, the chairman of the forum. "I don't think there are any huge obstacles over policy."

"After that we would like to call a meeting of all the party chiefs," he told a news conference after Saturday's meeting.

Mr. Hata looked set to be named successor to Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa at that meeting, coalition sources said.

Mr. Hata is now in Morocco for a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade meeting and was expected to return Sunday.

Mr. Hata, 58, is the leading contender because of his record as farm, finance and foreign ministers and extensive experience in dealing with Washington's trade grievances.

After Mr. Hosokawa's sudden resignation on April 8 over a loans scandal, the coalition spent a futile week discussing how to choose his successor.

The dispute brought into the open a power struggle between Ozawa, the coalition's top strategist, and Mr. Ozawa's arch-enemy Masayoshi Takemura.

Mexican murder probe moves away from conspiracy

MEXICO CITY (R) — A source close to the inquiry into the murder of the Mexican ruling party's presidential candidate says a conspiracy had not been ruled out even though conspiracy charges were dropped against the five men arrested.

"The investigation is still going on and no possibility is being excluded," the source said.

But opposition and media critics said a recent turn in the investigation suggested the government might be paving the way for a cover-up.

Mexican authorities originally said a lone gunman, Mario Aburto, gunned down Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio as he campaigned in the northern city of Tijuana in Baja California on March 23.

A few days later, chief investigator Miguel Montes announced that at least seven people were involved in Mr. Colosio's killing, most of them with close ties to either state police or the PRI.

A videotape of the shooting

appeared to show accomplices clearing the way for Mr. Aburto and distracting the candidate as the gunman approached.

The investigation subsequently appeared to stall, as authorities released no explanation or motive for the murder although they had five people, including Mr. Aburto, in custody.

Last Sunday the case for a conspiracy began to unravel when a judge released a former policeman who organised a local security detail for Mr. Colosio's visit to Tijuana.

Rodolfo Rivalpacio had been accused of hiring at least three of the six other men detained or sought in connection with the murder.

The judge also dropped the conspiracy charges against the other four men arrested in connection with the crime, including the gunman, but stiffened the charges against his alleged accomplices to "participating in a murder."

Mr. Rivalpacio's release heightened suspicions among Mexicans that the instigators of

the killing will never be revealed, and even though Mr. Montes appealed the judge's ruling, opposition politicians blasted the government investigation.

"This investigation has shown itself up to now to be very weak. It's raised more questions and doubts than it has answered," said Alejandro Encinas, a deputy with the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and a member of the congressional commission looking into the murder.

The source close to the investigation said the judge had dropped the conspiracy charge because Mexican law defines conspiracy as plotting to commit several crimes, not just one.

"It doesn't mean Rivalpacio can't be charged if additional evidence can be presented," the source said.

Meanwhile, a band of gunmen assaulted a military roadblock near the Chapas state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez Friday and one soldier died in the hour-long shootout.

plomatic recognition and economic aid.

The other condition — that North Korea allow unimpeded international inspection of its nuclear sites — remains unchanged. But working-level officials from the United States and North Korea could begin contacts soon, according to Seoul officials.

"We will be flexible and forward-looking to deal with the nuclear issue but we cannot compromise on achieving nuclear transparency," a senior government official said.

"Details of how to resume nuclear dialogue with the North will be the main topic of talks with Mr. Gallucci," he added.

After the North barred International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from making full inspections, the U.N. Security Council issued a statement on March 31 urging Pyongyang to allow in-

spections by the U.N. agency. China has been blocking any harder line towards its ally.

North Korean President Kim Il-Sung, in a television interview broadcast Saturday, insisted his country had no nuclear weapons, no intention of building any, and no desire to destroy South Korea.

But he refused to clarify why it refused to allow full international inspections.

"I promise you we don't have nuclear weapons," Mr. Kim told Cable News Network in an interview marking his 82nd birthday Friday. "We don't have delivery systems. We don't have the technology to build them."

In a separate development South Korea Saturday sacked six generals during a major reshuffle of top officials designed to end the influence of the military in politics, military sources said.

A government official who asked not to be identified described the incident as "very minor and isolated" and said there was no indication that the Zapatista National Liberation Army was involved.

The Zapatistas launched a New Year's Day uprising for indigenous rights in Chiapas, but have observed a ceasefire since Jan. 17.

Last Sunday, Zapatista leaders told Reuters they did not intend to violate the ceasefire, which was initiated by President Carlos Salinas De Gortari, unless provoked by the army.

The battle took place several miles west of Tuxtla Gutierrez, or about 90 miles (150 km) from the nearest Zapatista positions.

Cobain widow denies heroin overdose reports

LOS ANGELES (R) — Courtney Love, the widow of rock star Kurt Cobain, denied in an interview she had overdosed on heroin in a Beverly Hills hotel last week. "It's not true. I wish I could go into it, but I've been advised not to say anything," Love told the Los Angeles Times in a brief interview from her Seattle home where Cobain shot himself to death on April 5. Love was arrested on April 7 at the Peninsula Hotel and booked on suspicion of possessing heroin, drug paraphernalia and stolen property. Her lawyer, Barry Tarlow, denied to Reuters that Love overdosed on heroin or had any in her possession. Mr. Tarlow said the drug possession charge arose from the discovery of a Buddhist good luck charm consisting of wrapped-up ashes. He denied reports that Love was under the influence of heroin or any other drug at that time. "She called 911 herself... as best I can piece it together now, because of an allergic reaction (to a prescription drug)," Mr. Tarlow said. Mr. Tarlow said the stolen property was a prescription pad left behind by a psychiatrist who was treating Love for depression.

Pregnant teacher fails to win job back

LONDON (R) — A British sex education teacher sacked after she became pregnant by one of her 16-year-old students failed Friday to win her job back. An education spokesman for the London Borough where Tracey Kearns's school was located said the ex-teacher, aged 29, had not shown up at a hearing before the school's board of governors and her dismissal was therefore confirmed. "She failed to attend, therefore her dismissal for gross misconduct stands," the spokesman for the newham Local Education Authority in East London said. It was not immediately known why she failed to appear. Ms. Kearns made headlines in British newspapers last month when she was dismissed from her job as a sex education teacher at Woodside Community School after giving details of her affair with 16-year-old student Tony Burrelli to the media.

Nursing mother escorted out of Rubens exhibition

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — A woman was asked to leave a Toledo museum of art exhibit containing Rubens nudes while she breast-fed her three-month-old son. The museum later apologised and said nursing is now allowed in exhibit rooms if done discreetly. Jane Nofke of Ann Arbor, Mich., complained that she was nursing in the corner of an exhibition room on Feb. 26 while draped with a shawl when guards told her breast-feeding was "not acceptable" and escorted her to a private room. "This type of unfriendly and aggressive behaviour to a mother and nursing baby is absolutely uncalled for," she said in a letter to the museum. "We posed no threat to the paintings nor other viewers. In fact, many of the paintings had nude women in them, not that my breasts were exposed." The exhibit was devoted to the works of the 17th century Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens, known for his large and fleshy nude figures.

Teacher worms her way into students' hearts

LOS ANGELES (R) — School principal Shirley Dirado literally wormed her way into her students' hearts Friday — she ate two earthworms, washing them down with orange juice, to honour a promise she made to them. Ms. Dirado, principal of the Colfax Elementary School in North Hollywood, pledged to eat a worm if each student at the school read at least two books during a "reading is fundamental" project. Ms. Dirado did more than honour her promise, she ate two worms, one for each book. "It wasn't something I liked doing, certainly not my favourite food, but it was a promise I made and I wanted to show the children that promises are made to be kept," said a grinning Dirado after the assembly of several hundred pupils aged six to 11 screamed in delight at the yucky worms went down her throat. "It was great, really neat, my stomach was turning over," said one excited nine-year-old. "Reading is fundamental" (RIF) is a national programme that encourages young children to read books on a regular basis.

Hawks tie Knicks for best conference record

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin (R) — Kevin Willis had 24 points and 18 rebounds and Mookie Blaylock scored all 16 of his points in the second half, including 11 in the third quarter, as the Atlanta Hawks defeated the Milwaukee Bucks, 105-96 Friday.

The win allowed Atlanta to remain in a tie with New York for the best record in the Eastern Conference at 54-23.

In Cleveland, Tyrone Hill scored six of his 12 points in a late-fourth-quarter run to lift the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 109-100 victory over the stumbling Miami Heat.

The Heat have lost four in a row and 11 of their last 14 games. Their lead over Charlotte for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference has dwindled to two games.

Mark Price scored 26 points and Gerald Wilkins added 22 for Cleveland.

In Boston, Dee Brown scored seven of his 25 points in the second overtime to lift the Boston Celtics to a 113-110 victory over the Orlando Magic despite 42 points by Shaquille O'Neal.

Dino Radja scored 29 points for Boston, which has won four of its last five games.

In Charlotte, B.J. Armstrong hit a three-pointer with 4.5 seconds remaining to lift the Chicago Bulls to their 10th straight victory, 88-85, over the Charlotte Hornets.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 16 of his 24 points in the second half and Anthony Mason had six points during a 14-4 fourth-quarter run that propelled the New York Knicks to a 103-90 victory over the Washington Bullets.

In Los Angeles, Rod Strickland's free throw with 1:48 left in the game gave Portland the lead for good and the Trail Blazers held off the Los Angeles Lakers, 105-100.

In Dallas, Jim Jackson hit a short jumper with 3.4 seconds remaining to lift the Dallas Mavericks to a 99-97 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

At New Jersey, Kenny Anderson scored 12 of his career-high 45 points in overtime to lift the New Jersey Nets to a 119-114 victory over the Detroit Pistons.

At Minnesota, Rik Smits led 13 of his 30 points in the first quarter as the Indiana Pacers defeated the Minnesota Timberwolves, 130-112.

Abbasi advance to second round of U-22 basketball championship

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Just as predicted, Al Abbasi proved that their under-22 team means business when they became the first team to qualify for the second round of the season's 12 competitions organised by the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF).

Al Abbasi Friday beat Al Yarmouk 77-47 (46-26) to lead group 1 standings with 6 points and will next face Al Ahli.

Meanwhile, Homentmen defeated Abu Nusair 56-44 (31-21) and Al Jazireh beat Al Watani 91-62. The Jali-Gazet Hashem match did not take place due to a misunderstanding with the Yarmouk University court officials.

The nine competing teams have been divided into two groups: Group 1 includes Al Ahli, Al Abbasi, Homentmen, Yarmouk and Abu Nusair, while the second group includes Al Jazireh, Al Jali, Al Watani, and Gazet Hashem.

After the preliminary round which ends April 29, only the top two teams of each group will qualify for the second round in which they will compete for the first of the season's titles.

Al Abbasi's young team has been playing with greater confidence since they beat Al Orthodoxi to clinch third place in the U-19 competition back in January. Al Abbasi mainly relied on Iyad Zalata, Ashraf Samara and Tareq Najjar to secure their third win. In earlier matches, they beat all-time rivals Homentmen 71-43 and Abu Nusair 98-24.

In another match, Homentmen overcame Abu Nusair to take third place for now with two matches against Al Ahli and Al Yarmouk remaining.

Homentmen led 9-0 in the 4th minute before Abu Nusair netted in a three pointer to open scoring. However, Homentmen widened their lead to 16-7 after six consecutive points by star Ala' Abu Rahmeb who scored a total of 22 points in the match.

As Homentmen secured rebounding by Abu Rahmeb and

Mohammad Qardan, Raffi Hayrabedian and Nader Rabadi scored to take their team's lead to 29-17 with less than four minutes remaining.

Abu Nusair lacked effective rebounding and mainly depended on scoring from outside the zone as the first half ended 31-21.

Homentmen's coach gave all bench players the chance to test their skills, as Abu Nusair picked up and played with greater ease. However, Homentmen kept a good lead after a three-pointer by Vasken Meneshian in the 8th minute.

Abu Rahmeb dazzled fans and opponents as he scored again to widen his team's lead to 54-36 before two three-pointers by Abu Nusair ending the match 56-44.

In the third match of the day, Al Jazireh scored a 91-62 win over Al Watani who despite defeat tried to give it their best.

Al Watani maintained a 13-7 lead early in the match. However, Al Jazireh soon caught up and tied at 16-16 after relying on a fast attacking game.

They took the lead in the 8th minute after new recruit Nasser Alawneh joined teammates Ghaith Ennabi and Anwar Haddad. Alawneh was Al Hussein's star before moving to Al Jazireh for a reported sum of JD 5,000.

Ennabi scored 10 consecutive points while Alawneh added another to take the lead 32-16. Alawneh then rebounded and assisted his new teammates before scoring 7 consecutive points, including a slam dunk, as Al Jazireh took total control of the match leaving no room for doubt that they were determined to qualify for the second round and fight for the title.

Al Ahli did not play Friday. They are now in second place after scoring two impressive wins 125-71 (71-34) over Al Yarmouk, and 160-43 (73-19) over Abu Nusair.

Like Al Ahli, Al Jazireh are expected to have an easy way to the second round, and have

Faisali extend their lead with win over lowly Sahab

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Although thousands of fans are anxiously awaiting the official crowning of Al Faisali as the Kingdom's soccer champions, the real spotlight is now on at least five teams whose fate will be soon decided when the final week of the first division soccer championship begins April 20.

The 21st week of action brought many surprises, especially by teams who were expected to have settled for relegation.

Al Baqaa crushed Al Qadissieh 5-1; Al Fuhais upset Al Yarmouk 1-0; Al Arabi surprised Al Ahli 1-0; while Al Jazireh secured their place with a 2-0 win over the first team to be relegated — Al Yarmouk.

While Al Wihdat and Al Hussein drew 2-2, Al Faisali scored another impressive win, when they defeated Sahab 4-0 to lead the 12-team standings with 54 points.

The week's most stunning result was undoubtedly Al Baqaa's 5-1 win over Al Qadissieh who had maintained an unbeaten record during the second leg of the competition before losing to Al Jazireh 2-1.

The match at Al Mafrag Stadium, was not completed as Al Qadissieh's players could not comprehend losing by such a score to a lowly team. While Al Baqaa led 5-1, Al Qadissieh's players lost their temper and tried to assault the referee when he issued a red card booking to one of their teammates. The incident was contained when the police and Al Qadissieh's officials intervened, and the club's chairman opted to suspend the match.

With the win, Al Baqaa remained in 9th place for now, but have 30 points into their last match against Al Yarmouk Wednesday. Al Qadissieh dropped to 6th place.

Al Baqaa's important win came after an all out attack from the outset of the match. Riyadh Diqs opened scoring in the 20th minute, followed a minute later by the second goal from Khaled Faleh.

Ismail Jaramneh stunned Al Qadissieh when he netted the third goal in the 37th minute. From then on, Al Qadissieh, who were eyeing the runner-up spot, became increasingly agitated and disapproved of the referee's rulings while strikers Mustafa Adam and Ismail Awadat lost two scoring chances.

Al Baqaa's Faleh scored his team's fourth goal in the 60th minute, while Al Qadissieh's only goal was scored by striker Ra'ad Al Momani.

Adel Abdul Nabi sealed Al Baqaa's win when he scored the fifth goal in the 65th minute.

The race for runner-up spot is still up, and will have to await Al Wihdat's and Al Hussein's results in the final week after their draw kept both with a chance to clinch the standing.

Although Al Hussein had the chance to score early in the match, Al Wihdat took the lead after a 10th minute goal by Hisham Abdul Mun'em.

Al Hussein equalised by a Mohammad Shweiter's stunning goal from a distance of 25 metres in the 33rd minute.

Kamal Al Kharouf's header gave Al Hussein a 2-1 lead in the 69th minute, but Marwan Al Shamali saved Al Wihdat from defeat when he equalised in the 88th minute.

In another match, Al Arabi stunned Al Ahli when Mohammad Al Alawneh netted in the match's sole goal in the 9th minute.

The win moved Al Arabi from 8th to 7th place, while Al Ahli remained fourth.

Meanwhile Al Jazireh, only a few weeks ago threatened by relegation, scored a 2-0 win over Al Yarmouk to move up to 5th place and secure their place among the Kingdom's top teams.

Veteran Tawfiq Al Saheb scored for Al Jazireh from a penalty kick in the 31st minute. Although Al Yarmouk's goalkeeper put up a big effort,

both teams seemed to lack accurate finishes, before Murad Hussan sealed Al Jazireh's win with a second goal in the 72nd minute.

Titleholders Al Faisali nearly ended Sahab's presence in the first division after a 4-0 win.

Sinker Jiryes Tadros scored the first two goals in the 25th and 35th minutes. Another header hit the post before teammate Mousa Awad added the third goal in the 70th minute.

Sahab seemed helpless and striker Mohammad Al Ashhab was closely guarded. Tadros scored his third goal in the match and 17th of the season to seal Al Faisali's win 4-0.

Meanwhile, Al Fuhais moved to 10th place after defeating Al Ramtha 1-0. Al Ramtha thus fell to 8th place after a string of disappointing results.

Al Fuhais, still clinging to a slim chance of avoiding relegation, attacked from the early minutes of the first half, but strikers Wa'ed Suweis and Khader Mubarak were unsuccessful.

Although Al Ramtha had the advantage in the first half, Fuhais stunned their opponents when striker Mubarak scored their winning goal in the 40th minute.

The final week will determine the four teams that will be relegated to the second division. Therefore, all results in the 22nd week will be of utmost importance as Al Ramtha clash with Al Ahli, Sahab take on Al Jazireh, Al Baqaa face Al Yarmouk, Al Qadissieh clash with Al Fuhais, Al Hussein play Al Arabi and Al Wihdat meet Al Faisali.

During the past week the JSF imposed a JD 1,000 fine on Al Faisali for the unsportsmanlike conduct of their fans. Al Wihdat were also fined JD 2,000 because of their fans' verbal abuse during matches against Al Ahli and Al Ramtha.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Torino cleared of offering prostitutes

ZURICH, Switzerland (R) — Italy's Torino were cleared by the European Football Union (UEFA) Friday of offering prostitutes to referees at European club matches two seasons ago. A UEFA disciplinary committee, which opened a hearing into the affair last month, found there was no evidence of wrong-doing after listening to club and match officials. "The committee has no proof that Torino tried to influence the referees in the two matches concerned," UEFA spokesman Salvatore Cucchi told reporters after the hearing. UEFA opened an investigation after an Italian fraud squad raid on Torino's headquarters threw up suggestions that prostitutes had been offered to match officials at UEFA Cup home games with Boavista of Portugal and Aek Athens of Greece in the 1991-92 season. Torino won the matches 2-0 and 1-0 respectively and went on to reach the final of the competition before losing to Ajax Amsterdam.

FIFA reaffirms World Cup TV replays

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP) — Television replays will be used to review fouls and disciplinary actions at the World Cup this summer for the first time in the tournament's history. Replays will be studied by a special disciplinary committee after a game has ended to determine whether to impose, revoke or let stand a player's suspension for a foul committed during the match. FIFA's disciplinary committee Thursday night reaffirmed its plans to introduce evidence. FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren said Friday any decisions taken will concern only players eligibility for the rest of the tournament and cannot alter the outcomes of games already played.

Chang beats Gilbert

HONG KONG (R) — Top seed Michael Chang reached his second final in seven days with a stuttering 6-2, 7-5 victory over American compatriot Brad Gilbert in the Hong Kong Open semifinals Saturday.

Chang, beaten by Pete Sampras in the Japan Open final last weekend, faces promising Australian Patrick Rafter, a 6-3, 6-4 winner against second seeded Ivan Lendl, Sunday.

World number seven Chang was in convincing form in the opening set but he floundered at stages in the second when the third seeded Gilbert started to put pressure on his serve.

"His (Gilbert's) double faults started to become contagious," said Chang, aiming for his third title of the year after wins in the U.S. indoor and Indonesian opens.

Rafter, the fourth seed, reached his first career final with a crisp serve and volley display against a visibly tired Lendl who played two three-set singles matches and a doubles Friday.

"I have been in three semis this year so it's good to make a final. Now I have to finish it off," said Rafter, world ranked 26th.

"I beat Chang in three sets at the Lipton Championships last month and if I play well I am sure I can score another win."

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Iraq refuses to lift immunity of diplomats held in Beirut

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Iraq rejected on Saturday Lebanon's request to lift the immunity of two Iraqi diplomats suspected of involvement in the killing of an Iraqi dissident in Beirut, state-run television Tele Liban reported.

It quoted Foreign Ministry sources as saying Iraq's charge d'affaires told ministry Secretary-General Zafer Al Hassan that Iraq rejected a request to lift immunity of Cultural Attaché Mohammad Khadhem and Commercial Attaché Khaled Khalaf.

The two Iraqi diplomats were arrested on Wednesday, hours after wealthy Iraqi dissident Taleb Al Suheil, who opposed the government of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, was killed at his Beirut residence on Tuesday.

Beirut newspapers were rife with speculation on Saturday Lebanon would cut diplomatic ties with Iraq if its request was turned down. Lebanese officials had no immediate comment.

Foreign Ministry sources said Lebanon's decision, which may extend to cutting ties, would be announced on Monday by foreign Minister Faris Bouez.

Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Awadh Fakhri, looking relaxed after meeting Mr. Hassan, told reporters at the Foreign Ministry: "I am relaxed... in matters bigger than this we did not cut ties with other countries."

He noted that 12,000 Lebanese live and work in Iraq and "they are treated like brothers."

"Every country should think of its interests," said Mr. Fakhri, who carried Lebanon's request personally to Baghdad.

He also said he believed it was unlikely Lebanon would take Iraq to the International Court of Justice in the Hague over the issue.

A Beirut newspaper reported that Lebanon seek World Court action if Iraq failed to agree to Lebanon's request. Government officials refused comment on the report.

The government says the attaches admitted under interrogation to involvement in the slaying under direct orders from Iraqi intelligence in Baghdad.

Suheil, 64, identified as a key figure in a plot against President Saddam Hussein, was killed by a single shot to the heart at his Beirut apartment.

The assassin's silence-equipped pistol was found in the car the two diplomats used to flee the scene, according to the authorities.

The authorities also want to interrogate Iraqi Consul Ali Sultan Darwish, allegedly the chief intelligence officer at the embassy, on suspicion of being the overall mastermind of the assassination.

Another embassy employee, George Tereedj, was formally charged Friday with complicity in Suheil's slaying, and ordered held in solitary confinement as well.

Asked if the dispute between Beirut and Baghdad would be resolved, Mr. Fakhri said: "This is in the hands of the Lebanese government. We have been cooperative and responsive."

In order to put the two diplomats on trial, Mr. Hassan summoned Mr. Fakhri on Thursday to ask him to lift

their immunity.

Mr. Hassan also demanded Iraq hand over a third suspect, embassy guard Hadi Hassan who took refuge at the Iraqi embassy, which is ringed by Lebanese security forces. Mr. Hassan is not considered a diplomat.

"Both requests were refused by the Iraqis," a source at the Foreign Ministry told Reuters.

The only Lebanese diplomat in Baghdad, Charge d'Affaires Saad Zakhya, has been called home.

Mr. Bouez told reporters on Thursday it was premature to say whether Beirut would cut ties over the killing, adding he hoped Iraq would cooperate. He has also said the Iraqi embassy had asked Lebanon to release the two diplomats, who are being held on arrest warrants issued by an investigating judge.

Relations between Iraq and Lebanon have been tense for years. Syria, Iraq's arch rival, intervened in the Lebanese civil war in 1976 and established itself as Lebanon's main foreign power broker.

Ties worsened when Iraq backed rebel Christian General Michel Aoun during his failed 1989 war against Syrian forces in Lebanon. Relations also turned sour two years later when Syria joined a U.S.-led alliance that ousted Iraq from Kuwait.

Suheil, who left Iraq after the 1958 overthrow of King Faisal was the second foreigner murdered in Beirut this year. A Jordanian diplomat, Nayeb Al Maaytah was shot dead in January. Members of Abu Nidal's Palestinian guerrilla group were accused of the assassination.



TENSION BELOW SURFACE: An Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporter taunts a South African Defence Force soldier on guard during an IFP protest held on Saturday in Benoni, east of Johannesburg (see page 8). The IFP was protesting against general elections scheduled for later this month and the killing of their members (AFP photo)

PLO insists on release of Hamas prisoners

CAIRO (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) will insist in the next round of talks on Sunday that Israel release Hamas prisoners held for political offences despite Israel's refusal to let opponents to the peace deal out on to the streets.

The prisoners are one of the obstacles in the long drawn-out talks on details of Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath told Reuters: "We will continue to negotiate the release of all Palestinian prisoners including all Palestinian shades of opinion."

Israel's attitude towards Hamas has hardened since members killed 12 Israelis by bombing buses in the towns of Afula and Hadera over the past two weeks.

Dr. Shaath said: "As much as we regret the incidents in Afula and Hadera... this should not be in any way an excuse for maintaining the bondage and the imprisonment of hundreds of Palestinians who have committed absolutely no security offence and who are in Israeli jails because of political resistance to an illegal occupation."

"This is the only acceptable consequence of our first genuine step towards peace. Peace should be concluded between the Palestinian and the Israeli people and not only between Fateh and the Israeli Labour Party and the responsibility of the PLO covers all the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails."

Dr. Shaath argues that many Hamas members are in jail for non-violent political acts such as distributing leaflets, putting

up banners and taking part in demonstrations.

The two teams, led by Dr. Shaath and Israeli Major-General Amnon Shahak, have been trying for six months to work out details of a transfer of power in Gaza and Jericho.

At the end of the last round of talks, which ended in Cairo on Tuesday, Israel agreed to free 5,000 Palestinian prisoners after it signs the autonomy agreement with the PLO.

Dr. Shaath said negotiations would continue on Sunday on the rest of the 8,500 prisoners, many of whom are Hamas members.

But Gen. Shahak, Israel's deputy chief of staff, said on Friday: "Hamas prisoners will not be released because they are against peace. We are not going to set on to the streets those who declare they are going to kill us."

Israel's stand is embarrassing to the PLO, which wants to win the sympathy of opponents of the agreement by showing them that the peace deal is a national, not a factional agreement.

Dr. Shaath said the talks would also focus on jurisdiction and on security matters. Another PLO official said the jurisdiction issue and the map of Gaza were the two main controversial points before signing.

He said that on the Gaza map, the Israelis retained control of all the coast and left to the Palestinians only a passage for commerce. They are refusing to allow Palestinian patrols, naval patrol boats and coastguards, he added.

"This is a pending issue. They are considering all the coast as a security zone," the

source said.

He said Israelis want full access and control of the "yellow zone" — the agricultural land around the Jewish settlements. The land is considered Palestinian property but the Israelis want full use of it for security purposes.

"They do not want us to build or have any projects in these lands all around the settlements. They say they want full access for security purposes," the source added.

The Israelis are demanding security jurisdiction on access roads linking the settlements with Israel.

"If there is any security breach or disorder on these roads, the Israelis want the right to deal with it and to try the culprit in Israeli courts if it warrants," the source said.

"This is their second line. They've now stopped saying that every offence against them will be under their jurisdiction. They agree to make it only in the security area. They see this as a great concession," another delegate said.

"At first they wanted that anyone who stings or pinches an Israeli must be under their jurisdiction but now no, they want it only in the security areas — the lateral roads and the settlement area," he added.

The Palestinians were still refusing to allow the Israelis any jurisdiction over Palestinians in the self-rule areas.

"We are telling them, 'no, you don't have any jurisdiction over Palestinians anywhere in Gaza and Jericho,'" one source said.

Dr. Shaath said civilian issues were almost finished and would take no longer than a day of talks.

Berlusconi coalition wins key parliament positions

ROME (AP) — The conservative coalition led by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi won a major victory Saturday by capturing the leadership of both houses of parliament.

The hard-fought battle, which took four rounds of voting over two days in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, opens the way for President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to select a premier to form a government. Mr. Berlusconi, one of Italy's richest men, is the leading candidate.

The victory in the Senate was particularly significant because the conservative coalition fell just shy of a majority in national elections March 27-28. It had won a clear majority in the chamber.

Wild applause filled both chambers of parliament, and supporters of the Senate winner, Carlo Scognamiglio, pounded him on the back and shook his hand.

Mr. Scognamiglio, a university dean and former telecommunications executive, beat the former Senate leader, Giovanni Spadolini, by one vote after a tie ballot in the morning. If they had tied again, the rules would have given the older candidate, Mr. Spadolini, the job.

Mr. Spadolini was supported by the leftist coalition that lost the March election, and was portrayed by the conservatives as a symbol of the past.

The senate leader is second in line to the president of the country.

Mr. Spadolini, a member of the tiny Republican Party, is a former premier. Mr. Scognamiglio, elected as a member of the conservative Liberal Party to parliament in 1992, ran under the Forza Italia banner of Mr. Berlusconi.

The chamber elected a 31-year-old woman, Irene Pivetti of the regionalist Northern League, as its leader.

Controversy dogged her candidacy. She was accused of having made anti-Semitic statements, a charge which she dismissed as "foolishness."

Ms. Pivetti failed to gain the required two-thirds majority in the first three rounds. The next round required a simple majority to win.

The four-month-old Forza Italia, Northern League party and rightist National Alliance, which has neo-fascist roots, form the winning coalition.

The parliament voting coincided with a ruling by a Rome court Saturday that absolved the infamous Propaganda Due Masonic lodge of conspiring against the state.

8 Diana will make rare public appearances

Diana will make rare public appearances

LONDON (AP) — Princess Diana, who rarely takes part in official duties nowadays, will make two public appearances at D-Day anniversary events in June, Buckingham Palace said Friday. Princess Diana, who announced in December she was getting out of the public spotlight to spend more time with her two sons, will join other members of the royal family at a commemorative service on June 5. The 32-year-old princess, who is separated from Prince Charles, will join her mother-in-law, Queen Elizabeth II, and other members of the royal family at the outdoor service for veterans in Southsea, 60 miles (95 km) south of London. Prince Charles, 45, will not attend the service, according to the schedule of events released by the palace. On June 3, Princess Diana will be in London's Green Park to unveil a monument commemorating the Canadian war effort.

Jackie Onassis hospitalised

NEW YORK (R) — Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the widow of assassinated President John F. Kennedy, is being treated in a New York hospital, CBS News reported Friday. Mrs. Onassis, 64, revealed two months ago that she was receiving chemotherapy for cancer of the lymph system, but CBS had no information on whether her hospitalisation was related to that ailment. The former first lady has lived in Manhattan for years working as an editor, following the 1975 death of Greek shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis, whom she married five years after Kennedy was shot in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald.

Caffeine heightens stress in workplace

BOSTON (R) — Coffee lovers and people who drink other caffeinated beverages at work may experience intensified stress, according to a new study. The study, presented Friday at the annual conference of the American Psychosomatic Society in Boston by researchers at Duke University Medical Centre, found that caffeine stimulates the production of stress hormones, particularly adrenaline. This can trigger rises in blood pressure, heart rate and blood cholesterol — all of which contribute to the development of heart disease. "What we found is that caffeine interacts with stress and intensifies it, so that if you combine coffee drinking with a stressful job, the effects will be even more detrimental to your health," said James Lane, assistant research professor in psychiatry at Duke, who led the study. "Moreover, there is evidence that work-related stress may increase coffee consumption, which would further exaggerate cardiovascular and neuroendocrine stress responses," he said.

Tobacco chiefs deny cigarettes are addictive

WASHINGTON (R) — Major U.S. tobacco company heads denied cigarettes are addictive and rejected congressional charges that cigarettes are spiked with additional nicotine to keep smokers hooked. In a hearing that became steadily more contentious as the day wore on, chiefs of seven giant tobacco companies told a congressional health subcommittee — rejecting the findings of the U.S. Surgeon General, American Medical Association, World Health Association and a host of other medical authorities. "If it causes addiction, could 43 million Americans have quit?" asked James Johnston, chief executive of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., whose brands include Winston, Salem and Camel. "Smokers are not drug users or addicts, and we do not appreciate being characterized as such," said Philip Morris USA, whose company makes Marlboro and Virginia Slims cigarettes. In prepared testimony, Campbell said, "cigarette smoking is not addictive." The U.S. Surgeon General has reported tobacco is as addictive as cocaine or heroin, but the tobacco chiefs dismissed the smoking habit as no more addictive than watching television, playing video games or eating twinkies.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudan says large areas pacified

KHARTOUM (R) — A government-owned newspaper said on Saturday large areas of southern Sudan previously torn by unrest were now peaceful. Al Ingaz Al Watani newspaper said people in the towns of Fankaj and Atsar, where five relief workers were seized and then released by the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) in February, were living normal lives without fear. The newspaper said the army was in control of the area and was receiving defectors from the SPLA at the rate of 20 per day. However, a state television programme on Friday night indicated that the army had been in action on Bahr Al Jebel state in the Equatorial region of southern Sudan. The SPLA and foreign journalists recently reported fighting between government troops and SPLA forces south of Juba, southern Sudan's main town, and many civilians are reported to have fled south to escape. The Sudan government has officially not commented on the reported fighting. The 11-year-old war between the Khartoum government and the SPLA has displaced most of the six million people of southern Sudan, making it difficult or impossible for them to grow crops.

Saudi holds Pakistani drug suspects

DUBAI (R) — Eight Pakistanis who travelled to Saudi Arabia on Muslim pilgrimage visas could be beheaded if found guilty of drug trafficking, newspapers said on Saturday. The Saudi Arabian papers said all eight, arrested in Jeddah, had confessed to selling illicit drugs to youngsters after entering the kingdom to perform a minor pilgrimage. They published pictures of the accused but did not say when they were arrested. The alleged gang leader was identified as Saadar Doakhan who said the group had sold various narcotics, mainly adulterated heroin. Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's two holiest shrines, enforces strict Islamic law and executes rapists, murderers and drug traffickers. Beheadings are usually carried out in a public square after Friday noon prayers. This week, Bashir Ahmad Bashir, a Syrian, was beheaded for smuggling drugs into the kingdom.

Attack on Pakistani mosque injures 5

KARACHI (R) — Five people including the prayer-leader were injured when a bomb exploded at a Karachi mosque during dawn prayers Saturday, police and ambulance sources said. Two of the injured were in critical condition, ambulance sources said. There was no immediate information on who set off the bomb at the "Imanbargah" Shiite Muslim mosque in central Karachi. Police said they had formed a team to investigate the blast, which occurred a day after gunmen killed a former member of parliament, Rehman Umer Farooqi, in eastern Karachi. A local Shiite leader was shot dead in the town of Sheikhupura in central Punjab province two days ago, according to newspaper reports. Militant groups of majority Sunni Muslims and Shites have often clashed over theological differences.

Clintons eligible for tax refund

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton are entitled to an income tax refund of \$7,982 on their 1993 taxes but will apply the money to their 1994 taxes, the White House said Friday. The Clintons reported an adjusted gross income of \$293,757, including Mr. Clinton's presidential salary of \$189,167. They paid \$62,670 in federal taxes and claimed itemised deductions of \$71,482. Since he was inaugurated on Jan. 20, 1993, and thus not in office all 12 months, Mr. Clinton earned less than the president's full yearly salary of \$200,000. Like millions of Americans, the Clintons signed and mailed their federal income tax returns on the April 15 deadline for sending them to the Internal Revenue Service.

Last Nicaraguan contras turn in arms

QUILALI, Nicaragua (R) — The last of Nicaragua's contra rebels surrendered their weapons Friday, ending a cycle of guerrilla warfare in this Central American country. "With this, we close the chapter of war in Nicaragua, and we end the spilling of blood," rebel commander Jose Angel Talavera, alias the Jackal, told Interim Minister Alfredo Mendietas as Mr. Talavera handed over his U.S. made M-16 rifle. The rebels were the last remnants of the U.S.-financed contra rebel army that battled the Soviet- and Cuban-backed Sandinista government of the 1980s in a war that cost 30,000 lives. Though the Sandinistas were defeated in a 1990 election, hundreds of former contras began re-arming in 1991 to protest continued Sandinista control of the army.

Turkish official says trade ties with Iraq must be restored

NICOSIA (Agencies) — A senior Turkish official ended a three-day visit to Baghdad on Saturday, saying Turkey would work towards persuading the international community to lift the U.N. embargo crippling Iraq, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported.

Ozdem Sanberk, a Turkish Foreign Ministry undersecretary, said Turkey had started taking the steps necessary to resume commercial relations as soon as the sanctions were removed.

Mr. Sanberk was in Baghdad for talks on the disposal of an estimated 7.5 million barrels of oil trapped in an Iraqi pipeline to Turkey's Mediterranean coast. Experts have said Turkey is concerned the oil could erode the structure and render it unfit for use by the time the embargo is lifted.

The Turkish official told the INA his talks in Baghdad had been "positive and friendly."

"It was agreed with the Iraqi side on the necessity of restoring trade relations between the two countries to its normal previous situation before the embargo was imposed," the news agency quoted Mr. Sanberk as saying.

"The current role of Turkey is to help the international society towards lifting the embargo of Iraq, and ending the suffering of its people," Mr. Sanberk said, according to the report monitored in Nicosia.

Mr. Sanberk also said contacts between the two countries' foreign ministries would continue. His visit was made in response to an invitation extended by his Iraqi counterpart, Riyad Al Qaisi, who was in Ankara in January for talks on the pipeline and to seek Turkey's support for an end to the U.N. sanctions.

On Friday, the Al Thawra newspaper of Iraq's Baath Party urged Turkey to unilaterally break the embargo, which the U.N. Security Council extended for another six months earlier in March.

Iraq wants Malaysia to help win support against the United Nations sanctions, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Al Sabah said on Saturday.

"We are seeking the support of Malaysia to the just demand of lifting sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people," he told reporters.

The Iraqi minister had called on Malaysia's Acting Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar on Friday.

A first for peace — Israelis in Oman

MUSCAT (AP) — Another breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli peace process was marked this weekend with the arrival of the first Israelis ever to set foot officially in the Gulf.

But they formed only one of 44 delegations in Muscat for a conference on management of the region's scarce water resources — which experts fear could become the next source of conflict in the region — and the Omani hosts received them no differently from the rest.

"Oman, like the rest of the Gulf, were places we only read about," Yossi Gal, spokesman for the Israeli delegation, told the Associated Press over breakfast Saturday. "The peace process is a long process, but this is another step in the direction."

The four-day water meeting, which begins Sunday, is part of a series of discussions on future cooperation in the fields of economy, water, refugees, disarmament and environment that began after the 1991 Madrid peace conference.

They are known as the 28-month-old U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace process and are designed to build a foundation for peace by fostering cooperation on important regional issues.

They are different from the bilateral negotiations hosted by the United States, which involve Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

Syria and Lebanon are boycotting the multilaterals, now in their fifth round, saying an overall peace deal should

come first. Syria said Saturday the talks would open the door for further Israeli procrastination on its withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

And Iran, which opposes the entire peace process, Saturday condemned its good friend Oman for allowing the Israelis to attend the conference.

Without naming Oman, state-run Tehran Radio said: "It is amazing that countries without diplomatic relations with the Zionist regime are welcoming these occupiers whose hands are drenched with the blood of innocent Palestinians."

Khamees Al Battash, head of the water conference's organising committee, said Omanis and Israelis have met before at previous conferences.

"But it is the first time we host them and the first time the Israelis come to our country," he said. "We have received them as any other delegation."

The 19-member Israeli team, led by Deputy Foreign Minister and Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiator Yossi Beilin, arrived late Friday via Egypt, accompanied by an equal number of journalists.

"This here is business as usual, another example that the peace process is stronger than terrorism — terrorism on the one hand, and peace on the other," said Freddy Zach, who is responsible for civil administration in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

They were taken on the scenic but empty roads from the airport to the waterfront Muscat Intercontinental Hotel.

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Sheikh's family blames U.S. for his health problems

CAIRO (AP) — Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman's family blamed "bad treatment... and lack of proper food" for the cleric's ailing health in a U.S. prison.

In a telephone call from the cleric's oasis home at Fayoum, 80 kilometres south of Cairo, the cleric's son Abdullah Omar, 18, said he had heard no reports that his father needs heart surgery. He said he would not be surprised if it were true, because the cleric was being denied food and company.

Jailed in New York, Sheikh Omar awaits trial on charges he directed 15 other men in a plot to bomb the United Nations building and the Holland and Lincoln tunnels and to carry out assassinations and kidnappings. His followers have been implicated in the Feb. 26, 1993, bombing of New

York's World Trade Centre. Ron Kuby, one of the blind cleric's New York lawyers, said Thursday that Sheikh Abdul Rahman told him the U.S. Bureau of Prisons tried to get his consent to heart surgery. He said doctors had determined the surgery was necessary to unclog potentially fatal congested arteries.

Mr. Kuby said Sheikh Abdul Rahman refused because he "does not trust the government to provide proper medical care."

Sheikh Abdul Rahman's son Abdullah said he had heard nothing of a possible heart problem but said he was not surprised that his father's health was declining.

The cleric's son, who followed his father in studying at Cairo's Al Azhar, the centre of religious instruction for Sunni Islam, said "bad treatment in

the U.S. prisons" is causing Sheikh Omar's plight. "Keeping him in solitary confinement" did it, Abdullah said, and "not giving him the food he needs."

"The cleric has requested meat butchered in the Islamic way, but they refuse," said Abdullah, the eldest of Sheikh Abdul-Rahman's 10 children remaining in Egypt.

Abdullah said his father calls "every few days" from his U.S. prison.

But Abdullah said his father normally says nothing to upset his family, "every time we ask about his health, he just says, 'thanks be to God,'" Abdullah said.

He says the family normally learns of his father's prison ordeal through magazines and newspapers that interview him. "We always ask him about the interviews, if what was said is

true," Abdullah said. "He says yes."

In one of those interviews, Abdullah said, the London-based Lebanese magazine Al Wasat reported that the cleric "likened prisons in the U.S. to those in Egypt."

He served eight months in 1970 for preventing people from praying over the corpse of republican Egypt's first President Gamal Abdul Nasser. He also was imprisoned for a time after Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat was assassinated in 1981 on the ground he told his followers killing Sadat was religiously sound. He was acquitted.

Asked if his father could be suffering heart problems, Abdullah said "that is up to God" but added that his father had suffered "crises" brought on by "unpleasantment when he was in prison."